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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE GRADUATE STUDENT AS PRACTICUM CONSULTANT

BY

COLIN CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1993

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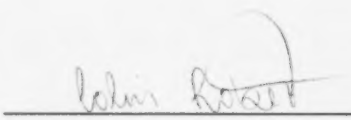

Colin Christopher Roberts

Permanent Address:

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T0E 0W0

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THE GRADUATE STUDENT AS PRACTICUM CONSULTANT

SUBMITTED BY COLIN CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

W. G. Maynes

Supervisor, W.G. Maynes

B. Young

B. Young

Katherine Willson

K. Willson

Date: September 24, 1993

ABSTRACT

In this study, the experiences of five graduate students who were practicum consultants at the University of Alberta are examined. The methodology employed was that of an interpretive study, data being collected through a series of three interviews with each of the participants. The study was conducted in the academic year 1992/93. At the time of writing, practicum programs at the University of Alberta were under scrutiny and the elementary practicum had been recently revised. These changes had a significant impact on the definition of the practicum consultant's (now called "university facilitator") role.

Seven categories were identified through analysis of the data: (1) motivation, (2) the "model", (3) university relations, (4) student teacher relations, (5) school relations, (6) commitment, and (7) rewards.

The participants' work as practicum consultants was constrained by the perceived need to develop collegial relations, their own relative ignorance of the content of teacher education programs, and the limited classroom experience of student teachers. A recommendation of the participants was that the university should provide further preparation to practicum consultants, especially those assuming the role for the first time.

The graduate students were highly committed to their supervisory work, sometimes to the extent that it detracted from their own studies. All the participants appeared to go through a process of reconstructing their role. The supervisory behavior of the practicum consultants was influenced not only by written practicum policy, but also the expressed demands of the other practicum participants, and by their own sense of responsibility.

Although the supervisory roles of practicum consultants in the University of Alberta Elementary and Secondary practicums are different, the experiences of the participants of this study were, in essence, very similar.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize those individuals who made the task of writing this thesis such a pleasurable and rewarding experience.

To those unnamed participants who so willingly devoted their time to help a fellow student in pursuit of his studies, I would like to give my thanks. I truly appreciate the time they took to tell me their stories, at a time when they had many other commitments of their own.

To the staff at the Office of Field Experiences who supplied much of the background information on the University of Alberta practica programs, I offer my thanks.

I would also like to thank Dr. Linda LaRocque for her assistance, especially during the data collection and analysis stages, and Dr. Joe Fris for his help with the Literature Review. Special thanks to my committee members Dr. Beth Young and Dr. Katherine Willson. Their help and support were greatly appreciated.

From my advisor, Dr. Bill Maynes, I could not have asked for more. From the initial conception of the study until its completion, the support and guidance I received was invaluable. I consider myself fortunate to have been under the charge of so fine a mentor.

Last, but not least, my special thanks to my wife and "peer reviewer" Christine, and son Eddie. Their support of, and patience with, their distracted husband and father made all this possible. Without their encouragement I would never have started.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta offers a number of programs that lead to a Bachelor of Education Degree. These programs aim to prepare students for a career in teaching. An important component of all these programs is the teaching practicum. The practicum demands that prospective teachers spend a period of several weeks working in a school. Under the supervision of school and university personnel, student teachers work towards adopting full responsibility for the teaching of school classes. The practicum, therefore, provides student teachers with opportunities to acquire practical experience in their intended profession. Successful completion of the practicum is a prerequisite for completing the Bachelor of Education program.

The practicum experience is recognized by many educators as a crucial element in teacher preparation. In response to the perceived need to improve this experience, the practicum programs at the University of Alberta are being examined and revised. Some of the changes are directed at influencing the manner in which university supervisors work with student teachers.

The supervision of student teachers is performed by a variety of groups, one of which is graduate students enrolled at the university in Doctoral or Master's programs in Education.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study addresses two purposes:

1. To examine the nature of the university consultant's role in student teacher practica.

2. To examine the experiences of graduate assistants who fulfilled the role of university consultant, and thus gain insight into how they came to terms with their position and the demands placed upon them.

Questions Addressed

1. How closely did the consultants' perceptions of their role match descriptions of the role found in the related literature?
2. What were the experiences of the university consultants?
3. To what extent did the graduate students feel that they were adequately prepared to fulfill the role of consultant?
4. How much significance did the graduate assistants attach to their assistantship positions?
5. How did the graduate assistants reconcile their study commitments with their assistantship commitments?
6. In what ways did the experiences of the consultants serving as university facilitators in the elementary practicum program differ from the experiences of consultants acting as faculty consultants in the secondary program?

Significance of the Study

As the University of Alberta elementary and secondary practica were under scrutiny, I hoped it would prove valuable to examine the experiences of graduate students who were directly involved in the practicum program. Those responsible for making the decisions about the

practicum may find this report useful when evaluating their respective programs. This may be particularly so with respect to the elementary program where the emphasis is shifting and the demands placed on those involved are being revised. An understanding of how university facilitators reacted to the changes may prove helpful in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of aspects of the new program, and assist when implementing further change.

In conducting this study, I sought to explicate the nature of their involvement. The results of the study, therefore, may be of interest to those involved in preparing graduate assistants to fulfill the task of practicum consultant.

Definitions

"Practicum" refers to the field placement of student teachers in a school, during which time they have the opportunity to continue their learning and acquire practical teaching experience.

"University facilitator" is the title of those individuals who represent the University of Alberta in practicum supervision of student teachers in the elementary program. **"Faculty consultant"** identifies those who fulfill a supervisory function during the practicum with student teachers in the secondary program. Throughout this study I shall use **"consultant/s"** or **"practicum consultant"** as a generic term to apply to both elementary university facilitators and secondary faculty consultants. I have chosen to do so because I found that in many respects the experiences of university facilitators and faculty consultants were very similar. Where I believe it is necessary to

distinguish one particular group from the other I shall use "university facilitator" and " secondary faculty consultant" as specific titles.

"School facilitator" is the term used by the University of Alberta to describe classroom teachers who supervise student teachers in an elementary school. Classroom teachers who supervise student teachers in secondary schools are called **"cooperating teachers."** Both school facilitators and cooperating teachers are qualified, certified teachers, responsible for the summative and formative evaluation of student teachers. **"Cooperating teacher/s"** will be used to refer to all school teachers whenever it is unnecessary to indicate whether they worked in elementary or secondary schools. Where it is necessary to differentiate, school supervisors of student teachers in the new elementary practicum are referred to as "school facilitators."

The concept of reflection is complex and has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. However, for the purposes of this study, **"reflection"** is simply defined as the act of contemplating one's choice of action and the basis on which this choice is made.

The term **"triad"** is used to describe the three-way relationship of student teacher, school facilitator/cooperating teacher, and university facilitator/secondary faculty consultant which forms the primary working unit in the practicum.

The secondary practicum is divided into three distinct phases. **"Phase Three"** is the student teachers' final preservice experience, and includes eight weeks of student teaching.

Background

In this section I provide a general summary of the two main practicum programs that were in place at the time this study was conducted. I also describe briefly the role of university facilitator and the secondary faculty consultant in their respective programs.

The Practicum Models and the Consultants' Role

At the time of writing, the elementary practicum program and the secondary practicum program differ significantly in several respects. The secondary practicum program is conducted along what could be described as "traditional" lines. The secondary practicum is phased over three years, with the longest and most significant school placement occurring in the fourth and final year of the student teacher's Bachelor of Education program. For this practicum placement each student teacher is assigned a cooperating teacher and a faculty consultant. The secondary faculty consultant is responsible for conducting a recommended number of "supervisory visits" (minimum of six). On these occasions the faculty consultant is to assist in the development and analysis of the student teacher's classroom teaching. In addition, the secondary faculty consultant is responsible for providing the student teacher with written mid-point and final progress reports.

The innovative nature of the elementary practicum must be understood in relation to the Faculty report that was its genesis. In 1986, in response to general criticism of the existing practicum program, the University of Alberta Faculty of Education formed a Strategic Planning Task Force to examine emerging frameworks for organizing teacher preparation programs. The search for a more

appropriate structure revealed that two possibilities showed promise: the "Concerns-Based Model" and the "Critically-Reflective Model." The concerns-based model proposed that the content of teacher education programs should address the concerns of the student teachers enrolled in it. As such it is able to explain and perhaps deal with some of the frustrations that student teachers feel with training programs. The essence of the critically-reflective model is the notion that teaching is a complex act for which very few rules and procedures can be prescribed. The focus, therefore, is on assimilating theory with practical experience. With this in mind a blending of the two approaches was recommended, and described as "reflection in action."

In 1991 the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta conducted pilot projects that tested the model. The following fall the Department of Elementary Education introduced the new practicum program based on the projects piloted in the previous academic year. The new elementary practicum differs from previous models in many respects. A new system of placing student teachers in schools was implemented, the roles of the school facilitators and university facilitators (previously called cooperating teachers and faculty consultants respectively) were revised, and a new philosophical focus was provided (Lambert, et al., pp. 1-2).

The field experience aspect of the "reflection in action" teacher education program was guided by seven principles:

1. Field experience should develop teachers who are reflective as well as proficient.

2. Field experience should develop teachers who share the norms of collegiality and experimentation.

3. Field experience should be school-based rather than classroom-based and selected schools should foster reflection, collegiality, and experimentation.

4. Field experience should actively involve school administrators, especially as instructional leaders.

5. Field experience should be a collaborative undertaking between the Faculty of Education and the field.

6. Field experience should involve participants in ways that enhance supervision and increase opportunities for leadership.

7. Field experience should be informed by theory and research.

Several significant changes were made to the program on the basis of these principles. The elementary practicum became a "term practicum" rather than a "phased practicum." In the new model, the field placement was extended to a single twelve week experience to provide a more in depth experience within a single school. This marked a departure from the phased program where twelve weeks was spread over two years, in blocks of four and eight weeks respectively. The "apprenticeship model", where the student teacher was placed in the charge of a "master teacher", was replaced by a "reflective model" which incorporated a half day per week compulsory "reflective seminar." The reflective model attempted to encourage student teachers to consider their moral, ethical, and professional beliefs in relation to teaching (Jackson and McKay, 1993, p. 2).

The movement away from the apprenticeship model also influenced the placement procedures for student teachers. Previously, placement depended on the willingness of individual teachers to receive student teachers. However, the new system required the entire school, not just

individual teachers make a commitment toward the practicum. Schools that chose to be involved had to submit a school plan before they could be selected to participate in the term practicum. Providing a variety of school-based experiences for student teachers was also emphasized. In order to promote collegiality and experimentation, groups or cohorts of three or more student teachers were assigned to the schools.

The revised program also heralded changes in the role of the university representative. This was done to address some of the concerns reported in previous years, and to enable the university representative to better facilitate a reflective approach. To help alert the participants to this change in role, the university representative's title was changed from faculty consultant to university facilitator.

It was the university facilitator's responsibility to assist in the development and maintenance of positive working relationships with school facilitators and school personnel in general. These included: (1) coordinating the collaborative evaluation of the student teacher, (2) providing assistance to the school facilitator in understanding the objectives of the program, and (3) developing appropriate learning experiences for the student teacher. Their major responsibility was to help the student teachers link practice to theory through engaging in reflection. The redefined university facilitator's role eliminated the requirement that the facilitator make a specified number of clinical supervision observations of each student teacher. However, some observation of lessons was encouraged, especially when requested by the school facilitator or the student teacher. Observing lessons was also expected if the student teacher was experiencing problems. The

university facilitator was also expected to be called upon to mediate conflicts if the school facilitator or student teachers felt this was necessary (Jackson and McKay, 1993, p. 3).

Thus, the assigned responsibilities of elementary practicum "university facilitators" and secondary practicum "faculty consultants" differed in some respects. The common ground was that those assigned either role were expected to assist, as best they could, fourth year students in their development as teachers. Also worth noting is that the university representatives from both programs continued to be drawn from full-time university faculty members, part-time external consultants (often retired teachers), teachers seconded from the school system, and graduate students.

It was within this context that the participants in this study cperated.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed is that of an interpretive study. Interview data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted in an attempt to acquire a greater understanding of the experiences of graduate students who act as practicum consultants.

Description of the Participants

The research focused on the experiences of five graduate students from the University of Alberta. Three of the selected graduate students served as university facilitators in the new Elementary Practicum Program. The other two were drawn from the Phase Three Secondary Practicum Program. The participants selected were full-time students.

Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of the participants. Selection was based on previous consulting experience (some participants had no supervisory experience before enrolling at the university for their present course of study, others had been consultants previously), gender, and program of study (master's or doctoral). Purposive sampling was favored over random selection due to the desire to obtain as wide a range of responses as possible.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in early January, 1993, and provided some indication as to whether research would produce findings of any significance. Three interviews were conducted with graduate students who had been faculty consultants in previous terms. The pilot study

provided an opportunity to develop my interview technique. The pilot study was also used to evaluate and improve the interview guide (included in Appendix I). The information obtained assisted in reducing researcher bias and minimizing design flaws.

I focused on improving interview questions, attempting to assure that the questions were interpreted in the same way by everyone. Pilot study participants were asked to indicate which questions they thought could be interpreted as "leading questions". Responses to open-ended questions which led the interview in unexpected directions provided the opportunities to develop additional probes to obtain greater understanding. I tried to identify questions that may have been perceived as threatening, and rephrased them as necessary. Pilot study participants were also asked to express whether they thought that the interview questions raised all those issues that they considered were most important, and to indicate where they perceived the gaps to be.

The adequacy of data recording techniques was also examined. I took audio recordings of two of the interviews and attempted note taking in one other. This experience convinced me to rely on audio recordings of the interviews. I found that taking notes during the interview disrupted the flow of the conversation. I also found that I was better able to follow the conversation, and able to ask more probing follow up questions if I concentrated solely on listening to the comments of the pilot study participants.

Research Design and Procedures

A list of all the graduate students serving as university facilitators or secondary faculty consultants was obtained in December of 1992. From this list, subjects for the pilot study and the research project were selected, and their cooperation sought for involvement in the study. The research project was delimited to mid-January to April, 1993.

Data were collected through personal interviews. Each subject was asked to participate in three interviews. These were scheduled as follows:

1. Shortly after the beginning of the practicum round.
2. Towards the middle of the practicum.
3. Shortly after the completion of the practicum.

The first round of interviews was semi-structured, using an interview guide to provide a general direction for the interview. These interviews provided much of the basic, factual information about the participants and the context in which they were performing their consulting duties.

Subsequent interviews were less structured, the purpose being to encourage interviewees to relate their experiences. Consequently, these interviews were more conversational in tone. A few open-ended questions, designed to elicit richer responses, formed the basis of the second round of interviews. During these interviews, issues and forthcoming events alluded to in previous personal interviews were discussed. This permitted consideration of issues that were raised as the research progressed.

In the final round of interviews, in addition to encouraging participants to further relate their experiences, I asked them to comment on seven general headings which I had extracted from data from previous interviews.

Data Analysis

All of the interviews recorded were transcribed verbatim. Before I proceeded with the data analysis some editing was performed in order to protect participant confidentiality, and to reduce ambiguity I found in some sections of the dialogue. As I read the transcripts, I would adjust the punctuation in an attempt to turn the spoken word, as I had transcribed it, into more meaningful sentences. However, editing was restricted to a minimum in an effort to retain the essence of the interview. This process reaffirmed for me that dialogue is less easily understood when one tries to convert it to the written form. At this point I was pleased I had the audio recordings to refer back to when necessary.

The transcripts were then subjected to several readings. Each time I re-read the transcript, things would make a little more sense and I could recreate in my memory, to some extent, the interview situation. When certain ideas or issues struck me as particularly significant, I made a note in the right-hand margin. Comments participants made could be regarded as significant because the participants themselves described them as such, or because I personally thought they were important. Some of the comments recorded also raised questions--questions I hoped to secure answers to in my final interviews with the participants.

Once I was able to acquire a sense of what was said in the interview, I began to demarcate "units of meaning" (Ely, et al., 1991). This involved isolating areas of text in which I perceived that a particular meaning, or idea, was expressed. I often had some difficulty demarcating where one idea finished, and another idea began. It also appeared, that in those "run-on" sentences common in dialogue, that two or more units of meaning could be found in one sentence. I completed the task sure of the fact that if I asked someone else to repeat the same procedure on the same transcript, the end result would be somewhat different than mine.

When an entire transcript had been divided in this fashion, I was ready to start applying a label to each unit, in the margin of the transcript. I took the units one by one, and read them again to try and find a term or short phrase to describe the basic meaning contained in each section. When I thought of something that I felt was a reasonable fit, I recorded the term/phrase in the left-hand margin. Some units seemed easy to label, whilst others were less so. I found some units difficult to label because they dealt with more abstract concepts, or because they seemed to incorporate a number of issues. Consequently, I chose to use more than one label if I thought that more than one meaning was present in a unit, and that they could not be separated without introducing ambiguity.

This process inevitably led to some readjustments of the units as some units were further divided, and others combined. As I worked through the transcript I made a conscious effort to label each unit as a separate entity, and not be restricted by the labels I had already applied. I hoped that this process would generate the labels which

would prove to be most suitable for describing the ideas the participants expressed.

The same procedure was followed with subsequent transcripts: reading and re-reading, adding punctuation, making notes in the margins, and marking off units of meaning. When I reached the stage of applying labels, I again decided I would label each unit according to its content, rather than match the units to labels already created. This process generated many more new labels. When all the transcripts of the interviews conducted with one participant had been analyzed in this fashion, a complete list of all labels created was compiled. Labels that were related to each other were combined to reduce the total number of labels. I achieved this by either:

1. Selecting the label from the group which I thought was most representative of the total collection.
2. Creating a composite label from the terms I had applied.
3. Attaching a completely new label which I felt encompassed the meanings expressed more completely than any of the existing labels.

A heading was chosen by either choosing the label from the group I deemed most appropriate, creating a composite label, or attaching a completely new label.

The new labels were then applied to the units of meaning on each of the transcripts from which they were drawn. As I relabeled each unit, I would re-read each section to assess whether the new label adequately described the meaning therein. If I was reasonably satisfied that it did, the label was retained. If I was not convinced that it was representative of the meaning therein, I created another label which I

thought described the units more fully. On completing this process, I had established seven headings. They were:

1. Motivation
2. The Model
3. University Relations
4. Student Teacher Relations
5. School Relations
6. The Role
7. Rewards

Once this process had been completed, I gathered all the relevant pieces of text under their respective headings. This permitted a more focused analysis of the data, and led me to revise the placement and labeling of a few units of text.

I then proceeded to establish categories under each of the headings. These categories enabled me to organize the data within each unit into smaller and more specific groups. Three basic themes were then identified through examining the content of each of these subcategories, and linking some of the ideas that were expressed within them.

Limitations

Because of the timing of the study, the results might have been somewhat different than if the study had been conducted during the October to December practicum. Those graduate students in their second term as consultants might have become more comfortable since their first experience, and therefore the data might not be equally revealing. Differing study commitments and time management strategies might also have affected the data collected. The majority of the participants wanted to talk about previous events. I thought it would be unreasonable and artificial to ask them to discuss recent incidents in

isolation from their past experiences. Consequently, participants were encouraged to reflect back to their past experiences as consultants. Therefore, some of the stories participants related refer to earlier times and events.

Because the research is on a particular group of practicum consultants, the results may not be generalizable to practicum consultants in general, as only a small percentage of practicum consultants are graduate assistants. The findings may also be limited in their generalizability to other educational institutions because preparation, orientation, and support systems may be dissimilar.

The interaction of history might have proved a source of threat to the validity of the data. Special conditions prevailing at any particular time during the research may positively, or negatively, have influenced a participant's experience as a practicum consultant in a fashion which is inconsistent with general practice.

The possibility of researcher influence must also be considered. My limited experience in interviewing and interpreting interview data could have reduced the validity of the findings. Also, I needed to be aware of the danger of researcher bias. As a graduate student and faculty consultant myself, there is a risk that I might have applied my interpretations to the perceptions of the interview participants.

Standards of Rigor

With respect to the four criteria of methodological rigor in interpretive research, the following measures were taken in an effort to maximize the trustworthiness of the data.

Credibility

To enhance the credibility of the data, a "member check" was conducted. All the participants were provided with a copy of chapter 4, along with a covering letter (Appendix II) requesting they review my interpretation of their comments. The participants were invited to provide general comments, and to indicate whether any information should be added or deleted. The participants were provided with the option of contacting me in writing, by telephone, or in person, to discuss the findings.

All five of the participants responded. Very few changes were required or suggested. Some of the participants recommended that I elaborate on a number of the sections. It was also suggested that I might wish to make a clearer distinction between the elementary university facilitators and the secondary faculty consultants. I considered these recommendations, and in some instances acted upon them. However, in those sections where I perceived the participants' experiences were similar, or I believed that more detailed identification could threaten confidentiality, I decided against further changes.

Transferability

To assist the reader in assessing the transferability of the data, the context of the study is described. In chapter 1, details concerning the University of Alberta practicum programs are provided. Chapter 4 contains information pertaining to the participants' status as graduate students, and their experience as teachers and practicum consultants.

Dependability

In an attempt to achieve a measure of dependability, all original data were retained, and the various stages in the analysis of the data were recorded. At frequent intervals I met with my advisor to receive direction on methods of data analysis which would assist me in maintaining the study's standards of trustworthiness. I also received advice from another faculty member during the initial stages of identifying categories and subcategories.

An "audit trail" exists in the form of the original verbatim transcriptions of the interviews, the transcripts divided into "units of meaning", and hard copies of the labeled units sorted according to categories and color coded according to themes.

Confirmability

Standards of confirmability are addressed through the presentation of the data in chapter 4, the audit trail, and through the member check.

Research Ethics

Before commencing with the research I presented a proposal, along with the Research Ethics Review Application, to the University of Alberta Research Ethics Review Committee for consideration.

My major concern as researcher was to protect not only the confidentiality of the participants in the study, but also the identities of all those individuals who may have been referred to during the course of the data collection. Where it has been possible to disguise the identity of individuals or institutions through the use of pseudonyms, this has been done. However, in some instances this has not

been possible. In these cases, data which contain potentially sensitive information have been excluded, unless I have received the permission of the individuals concerned to include it.

In chapter 4, "Findings", the words "they" and "their" have been used to refer to the comments of one individual. For example on p. 97 I write: "Another consultant outlined *their* priorities: 'My highest priority right now is . . . to keep it in line.' The next time I spoke to the consultant *they* said:" Although grammatically incorrect, I chose to use those terms so that it would be possible to conceal the gender of the participant, and to avoid the use of the "he/she" convention.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I review some of the literature related to the role of the practicum consultant. I broach several different aspects of the subject in my analysis of this role:

1. Role theory.
2. The nature of the consultant's role.
3. Communication and collaboration with school personnel.
4. The link between the university and the consultant.
5. The consultant - student teacher relationship.
6. Consultants' attributes.
7. Commitment of graduate students who are consultants and the rewards they receive.

Sources examined include excerpts from books, research articles, graduate theses, reports, and conference presentation papers. Although an examination of all of the related issues is beyond the scope of this thesis, I report on those issues most relevant to this particular study. Consequently, although topics such as "reflection" and the various models for the organization of preservice teacher education programs are important, they are not central to the purposes of this study, and so will only be discussed briefly.

Role theory provides a logical framework for this review.

Role Theory

Role theory is the study of characteristic behavior patterns. This theory explains roles by presuming that individuals hold social

positions and that they hold expectations for the behavior of themselves and of others based on these positions. Three concepts are central to role theory. The first is that all roles are patterned by characteristic behaviors. Second is the assumption that all the participants in a social interaction assume "parts" which they will play. The third is that implied within each role are a set of expectations which are understood and adhered to.

Although definitions of role theory differ, almost all of them include a combination of these concepts. A frequently cited definition of "role" is, "the set of prescriptions defining what the behavior of a position should be" (Thomas and Biddle, 1966, p. 29). A position is a collectively recognized category of persons, based on particular characteristics they possess. These characteristics may be inherent, such as gender, or ascribed, such as doctor or lawyer. People are seen to behave in ways that are different, yet somewhat predictable, because of the positions they assume and the expectations which are held of them. Expectations refer to beliefs held about behavior likely to be exhibited by a person and the standards held for the behavior of a person.

Role conflict

Conflict can derive from a number of sources and may take many different forms. Conflicts are frequently rooted in incompatible goals, different viewpoints, and differing loyalties. Conflict arises when interests, or perceived interests, collide.

Role conflict is founded on the proposition that when others do not hold similar expectations for a person's behavior, that person will

be subjected to conflicting pressures and will, therefore, suffer stress. Role conflict is defined by Biddle (1986) as "the concurrent appearance of two or more incompatible expectations for the behavior of a person" (p. 82). Existing or perceived inconsistency in the prescriptions held for a person result in feelings of unease. The resultant stress produced by role conflict is often associated with poor job performance.

Other concepts from the field of role theory which are also relevant to the study of the consultant's role include:

1. Role ambiguity--where expectations are incomplete or insufficient to guide behavior.
2. Role malintegration--when roles do not fit together well.
3. Role overload--when a person is faced with too many expectations.

The Consultant's Role

Many elements are influential in consultants' perceptions and performance of their role. I divide this part of the chapter into five sections: (1) the nature of the role, (2) definition, (3) perceptions and expectations, (4) the model and the role, and (5) reflection and the role.

Nature of the Consultant's Role

Koehler (1984, p. 1) stated there is very little known about the beliefs, roles, and activities of the consultant. Although the practicum experience has received more attention since that time, research has largely focused on programmatic adaptations. As practicum programs have been rearranged and revised, so too has the nature of the

consultant's involvement. An array of titles used to describe the supervisor of student teachers is found in the literature - faculty consultant, practicum supervisor, clinical consultant, clinical associate, college supervisor, university supervisor, university consultant, and now, university facilitator.

Several functions are associated with the title, and with each change in title often came some subtle change in prescribed function. Taylor, Borys and LaRocque (1992, p.385) described the consultant as being responsible for assisting student teachers to relate classroom events to subject knowledge, and being a resource on teaching research. Other functions frequently performed by these supervisors include the placement of student teachers, orientation of students to the school situation, evaluation, observation, feedback conferencing, problem solving, and conducting seminars.

Katz (1986, pp. 4-6) and Katz and Raths (1992) identified six categories of demands, or six dilemmas, in the role of the consultant. They stated that emphasis on any one aspect is necessarily obtained at the expense of one or more of the others. Consequently, these six aspects of the role serve to push and pull the role taker in different, if not opposite, directions. These functions place consultants in the middle of a demanding environment where they have to act in response to the needs and requirements of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and the university field experiences operation. Zimpher, deVoss, and Nott expressed a similar view: "They [university supervisors] must survive in many different worlds and be many different things to many different persons" (1980, p. 14). The consultant ensures that university requirements are fulfilled, facilitates relationships among

student teachers, cooperating teachers, and the principal, and is the personal confidante to anyone in the triad who wishes to confide (Koehler, 1984, p. 3).

Definition of the consultant's role

Official statements specifying the role and responsibilities of the consultant are somewhat general. This fact has been cited as a source of both interpersonal and intrarole conflict. Guyton and McIntyre (1990) argued that the ambiguity of the role definition fosters an environment in which each of the triad (student teacher, cooperating teacher, and consultant) can interpret each of the respective roles according to their own expectations. Consequently, "The members of the triad bring role conceptualizations and expectations of each other to the student teaching experience that are often divergent and/or confused" (p. 523). In his study of the role of the faculty consultant, Hall (1980, p. 115) reported that where those functions of the role seemed ill-defined, there was least agreement between consultants and cooperating teachers, and consultants and student teachers.

It has been suggested (Ratsoy, Babcock and Caldwell, 1978, Hall, 1980, and Yates, 1981, p. 46, Taylor, et al., 1992, p. 385) that a set of guidelines to clarify the role of the consultant may help in providing a solution to the problem. In her study of the dilemmas faced by incumbents of the consultant's role, Applegate (1985, p. 63) also concluded that clearer role descriptions may minimize confusion. However, she recognized that because the interpretation of experience is an internal and human process, precision and predictability may be minimal. Niemeyer and Moon (1988, p. 17) adopted a somewhat different

perspective, and described ambiguity as a positive feature of the supervisory process: "Struggling through uncertainty and ambiguity is imperative if we are to truly engage in reflective thought and action."

In trying to define more clearly the consultant's role, one is confronted by other issues that foster conflict. For example, there are many different perceptions of the role the consultant should fulfill. Hall (1980, pp. 21-22) reported that although the triad groups perceived the consultant's role in approximately the same manner, they differed significantly on their perceptions of the ideal. Guyton and McIntyre (1990) stated that the research describes existing roles and expectations, but not what they should be.

Consultants' role perceptions and expectations

Koehler (1984, p. 10-11) reported that consultants believed that they served four main functions: providing support, facilitating growth, liaison, and public relations. Zeichner and Tabacnick (1982) adopted a slightly different approach, and examined the "belief systems" of consultants. Again, three categories were identified: technical-instrumental, personal growth-centered, and critical (p. 43). Although individual consultants varied in the way they gave meaning to their work, Zeichner and Tabacnick concluded that there were common elements in the belief systems which linked the various subgroups (p. 50). They stated that all of the consultants saw themselves as practising clinical supervision, and that they all identified helping student teachers to be more reflective and analytical as one of their goals.

Lasley, Applegate, and Ellison (1986, p. 132) argued that consultants appear to have a clear sense of the behaviors they expect

student teachers and cooperating teachers to exhibit. They classified these expectations under three categories: professional, instructional, and service and responsibility expectations. These expectations represented an anticipation of ideal circumstances.

"The Model" and the role

Zeichner (1992, p. 296) recognized the problems that the restructuring of the practica is having on those involved. He stated that consultants are struggling to come to terms with new dimensions of their roles. Because of the different belief systems that consultants bring to their work, Zeichner and Tabacnick stated (1982, p. 38) that "The 'model' begins to become an eclectic collection of methods and techniques and the goal of 'improving instruction' begins to take on many forms." When a new system is introduced individuals sometimes find it difficult to make the necessary role changes (Ashcroft and Griffiths, 1989, p. 47). Consultants may find it difficult to relinquish certain aspects of their role, and cooperating teachers hold established expectations which the consultant's new role may not fulfill.

Reflection and the role

One of the primary thrusts in many of the new practicum models is the development of reflective practitioners. Taylor, et al. (1992, p. 385) and Spellman and Jacko (1988, p. 27-28) argued that a conscious effort to move practicum participants towards a reflective model of supervision is required. However, Bolin (1991, p. 15-18) argued that consultants trained in the use of clinical supervision strategies may find it difficult to develop reflective thinking in student teachers.

The dialogue journal, for example, was regarded as a useful tool for developing reflective teachers. But, Bolin added, unless the consultant is skilled in responding productively, keeping a journal could become a "tedious exercise" for the student teacher.

Programmatic emphasis on reflective teaching has exerted pressure on consultants to ask certain kinds of questions of their students. In some practicum programs, consultants are now expected to encourage student teachers to evaluate not only their effectiveness, but also the moral and ethical aspects of their practice (Zeichner and Tabacnick, 1982, p. 41). Once again, the way consultants interpret their work can be influential. Zeichner and Tabacnick reported: "Despite the efforts of program directors to establish a coherent focus for the program around the concept of 'reflective teaching', individual supervisors filtered this mandate through their own sets of priorities" (p. 49-50).

Ashcroft and Griffiths (1989, p. 41) suggested that programs which stress reflective practice need new methods of appraisal in order to maintain consistency with the aim of developing self-critical teachers. A continuous method of evaluation based on "triangulated discussions" was suggested as most appropriate.

The consultant's role appears to be neither clearly defined, nor well understood. How consultants conduct their work is influenced by their beliefs, their perceptions of their responsibilities, and by the programs in which they operate.

Communication and Collaboration

Koehler (1984) suggested that communication problems could be a source of conflict for faculty consultants. Many consultants believed that the breakdown of communication between any combination of the student, the cooperating teacher, the principal, and themselves, was the major problem to avoid. She reported that consultants felt that any breakdown would reflect negatively on them, and therefore consultants were available at all times for consultation (p. 12).

Hoover, O'Shea, and Carroll argued that although consultants may be able to do little to influence the macro structure of the practicum, they can, through good communication, create favorable conditions for students' professional development (1988, p. 24).

To encourage consultants to establish better communication between members of the triad, the Secondary Route Practicum Handbook (1992) recommends that three-way conversations be arranged when practical.

Despite this apparent awareness of the value of good communication, many studies have documented that the quality, and quantity, of communication between the university and the school is inadequate. Yates (1981, p. 45) reported that fifty-six percent of cooperating teachers responded that greater communication was necessary between the university and the school, compared to 24 percent of university supervisors. Ratsoy, et al. stated that consultants reported twice as many incidents of communication than cooperating teachers (1978, pp. 75-78). The same picture was presented by Guyton and McIntyre (1990). They reported that the flow of communication from the university to the school was perceived as inadequate, and that unclear expectations resulted. Conferences tended to be held at the convenience

of the consultant and not according to the needs of the cooperating teacher or student teacher (Glickman and Bey, 1990, p. 561). As a result, the cooperating teacher spent little time communicating with the consultant. One may conclude that there is often a serious lack of communication between the university and the school and, as a result, many consultants and cooperating teachers may lack understanding of each others roles.

Consultants have reported feeling like outsiders whilst in schools, and that they are always aware of their "guest status" (Niemeyer and Moon, 1988, p. 18). Zimpher (1990, p. 47) suggested that if schools designated consultants with particular titles which recognized their role, it would assist with their integration into the setting.

Although Ratsoy et al. revealed (pp. 66-71) in the 1978 Evaluation of the Education Practicum Program that several consultants were unsure as to whether their primary function was evaluation or liaison, there now appears to be widespread agreement that the consultant should focus on liaison (Koehler, 1984, Bruneau, 1993b). Koehler (1984) revealed that liaison was regarded as the most important function of the consultant in the opinion of the nine supervisors she interviewed.

Professional Development School Sites and other practicum programs which emphasize collaborative endeavor have been examined recently (Zimpher, 1990; Taylor, et al., 1992). Although such "partnerships" have received favorable reviews, Zeichner (1990, p. 120) voiced reservations. He argued that although many positive things can come from professional development schools, they are not a "panacea" for the problems of the practicum.

Even where the value of collaborative effort is recognized, collaborative relationships may not necessarily be easily achieved. Bhagat, Clark, and Coombs (1989) concluded that, although consultants may appreciate the value of collaborative relations, they may still believe fundamentally that the solo method of supervision is best (p. 13).

Samiroden (1992, pp. 219-220) stated that prolonged engagement in the school is required to develop trust and collegiality. He found that meeting with school administrators provided ideas for ways in which the program could operate smoothly, and that these meetings simplified the consultant's task (pp. 214-215). However, consultants have reported that it is often difficult for school personnel to schedule the time to engage in meetings and professional development activities (Lasley et al., 1986, p. 138; Samiroden, 1992, p. 218).

Implied Criticism of Cooperating Teachers

Popular belief suggests that student teachers' classroom behavior is often an imitation of the model the cooperating teacher has provided. Consequently, some consultants feel that they have to be somewhat diplomatic in their criticism of classroom practices to avoid appearing critical of the cooperating teacher. But, these consultants may also feel an obligation to encourage the student teacher to employ teaching strategies which they believe are most effective and/or appropriate. Katz (1986, pp. 10-12) described this as the conflicting demands of coverage and placement. Professional training institutes, she argued, are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that students acquire the most recently developed practices. This implies that practices

currently employed need improvement. This can threaten the congenial relationships between the school personnel and the consultant. Defensive reactions from the cooperating teacher and the student teacher may be provoked if either feels they are being criticized too strongly (Niemeyer and Moon, 1988, p. 18). The conflict becomes more severe when classroom practices are at variance with the techniques, ideals, and strategies advocated by the consultant.

Knight, Wiseman, and Smith (1992) identified a similar conflict. They argued that the culture of the university, which stresses reflection and research, is in conflict with the culture of the school, which stresses experienced-based and practical knowledge. The consultant is often caught in the middle of this conflict. To maintain credibility within both cultures, the consultant has to find an appropriate point along the reflectivity-activity continuum.

This dilemma that confronts consultants is recognized in the Secondary Route Practicum Handbook 1992/93, in which it is suggested that consultants develop an awareness of cooperating teachers' philosophies of education, and the effect that this has on their perception of effective teaching. A sensitive approach is recommended to help establish and maintain positive rapport.

This conflict has been reported frequently in the literature. Hoover et al. (1988, p. 23), and Richardson-Koehler described the feedback session as an extremely awkward aspect of the clinical process. Richardson-Koehler stated that she found it easier to concentrate on the student teachers' behaviors, than to discuss "routines". A discussion of routines "constituted a potential criticism of the cooperating teacher's performance" (1988, p. 32). Frequently, the student teachers'

response in such situations would be that they were copying the practice of the cooperating teacher. This finding is supported by Zimpher, et al. (1980), who suggested that since student teachers modeled the teaching of the cooperating teacher, criticism by the consultant implied criticism of the teacher. Zeichner and Liston (1987, p. 39) also addressed this issue. They stated that, "discussions analyzing the educational rationales for classroom practices could be perceived as 'threats' by the cooperating teacher. Supervisors might prefer to leave aside such questions in order to avoid conflict and maintain smooth relationships with school staff."

Good communication between school and university personnel has been identified by some educators as a prerequisite for successful practicum programs. However, although these educators may recognize the need to improve communication, there are significant obstacles to overcome in order to achieve this goal. Lack of trust, organizational constraints, and conflicting cultures all represent potential barriers to improved communication.

The Link Between the University and the Consultant

In this section the relationship between the university practicum organization and the consultant is examined. Most of the information available on universities' expectations of consultants is found in the practicum handbooks of the various institutions. I found very little research on the universities' implicit expectations, or on the consultants' perceptions of these expectations. However, Hoover, et al. (1988, p. 22) stated that consultants had considerable difficulty in relating to the incongruities between university priorities and school

system realities. The information that is available on this topic is discussed in relation to the preparation and support provided to consultants by their parent institution.

Preparation and Support of Consultants

Ratsoy, et al. (1978, pp. 65-71) revealed that faculty consultants perceived themselves to be less than well prepared (mean rating of 2.4, on a scale from 1 - very poorly, to 5 - very well) for their practicum role. Zeichner (1990, pp. 107-108) identified the lack of formal preparation of consultants as being an obstacle to student teacher learning. Ashcroft and Griffiths (1989, pp. 45-46) suggested that it has been incorrectly assumed that the skills that made consultants effective teachers are sufficient to enable consultants to be effective supervisors. They concluded that there should be continuing staff development and support. The need for support and guidance in the form of guided practice, role play, and mentoring was noted by O'Connell Rust (1988, pp. 58-62) and Morehead, Lyman, and Waters (1988, p. 42). Anderson made further recommendations for all consultants who had not received formal preparation for the role (1990, p. 11). She suggested that these consultants should complete a formal course in supervision and serve an internship period.

In response to the lack of preparation of consultants for their supervisory role, some teacher-educators have trained consultants in the use of observation instruments (Zeichner, 1990, p. 112). But, the value of such preparation has been challenged by some educators. Koehler (1984, p. 13) reported that none of the consultants she interviewed considered the formal courses they had taken to be helpful. Niemeyer

and Moon concluded that some of the problems that supervisors face are often not considered in their preparation (1988, p. 21).

Glickman and Bey (1990) commented that university facilitators will need to be better prepared for their role than they have been in the past. Taylor, et al. (1992, p. 385) stated that, at present, consultants tend to limit their activities to the occasional observation, instead of working more closely with student teachers on an on-going basis. They recommended that an effort be made to move practicum participants towards a reflective and analytical model of supervision. Zeichner and Tabacnick observed that current training of consultants emphasizes "how to?" questions of supervision, and neglects questions of "whether to?" and "what for?" (p. 51). They argued that it is important that consultants are asked to examine the beliefs and assumptions they hold, and the goals towards which they are working.

In the 1990-1991 Field Experiences Annual Report (pp. 47-48) it is stated that consultants have been inadequately prepared due to lack of financial resources, and that additional training would be of considerable benefit to supervisors. O'Connell Rust (1988, p. 62) argued that teacher education programs should direct further resources to the training of supervisors because they have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the practicum programs. Morehead, et al. (1988, pp. 39-40) and Anderson (1990, pp. 6-7) have presented very similar cases.

Some authors have referred to the sense of isolation that consultants experience (Niemeyer and Moon, 1988; O'Connell Rust, 1988). Niemeyer and Moon stated that, "The decisions that must be made by the supervisor are usually made in a context with little peer interaction

and often little professional support" (p. 18). Bruneau (1993b, pp. 16-17) suggested that typically, faculties of education pay little attention to informing consultants about the content of curriculum courses. The absence of a forum for discussion of teacher education programs was reported as a source of frustration for consultants (O'Connell Rust, p. 58).

The Consultant - Student Teacher Relationship

Much of the literature on the work of consultants examines the relationship between the student teachers and consultants. For the purpose of this review the literature is divided into three sections: the working relationship, the consultant's role in the evaluation of student teachers, and managing conflicts involving student teachers. These issues provide the focus because they appear to be the most critical in determining the nature of the relationship between the consultant and student teacher.

The Working Relationship

There are a variety of dimensions to the relationship between the consultant and the student teacher. Although most of the literature focuses on the "professional" nature of the relationship, several authors have recognized "personal" dimensions. Koehler (1984, p. 11) and Bruneau (1993b) reported that consultants identified providing student teachers with personal support as a very important aspect of their role. Through examining consultants' entries in their student teachers' journals, O'Connell Rust discovered that 12% of the

consultants' responses involved providing encouragement and support (1988, p. 60).

One of the major points of contention between consultants and student teachers, and consultants and cooperating teachers, concerns the frequency of supervisory visits. A number of research articles have illustrated the discrepancy between the perceptions of consultants and the perceptions of the student teachers. Ratsoy, et al. (1978, p. 60) reported that 41% of elementary student teachers, and 37% of secondary student teachers, indicated that consultants made too few visits. By comparison only 21% and 17%, respectively, of consultants agreed. Alvermann reported that student teachers demonstrated a greater willingness to accept the consultant as a resource person if the consultant made supervisory visits at least once a week (1981, p. 25).

The pattern of interaction, it has been argued, casts the consultant in the role of an outsider. Guyton and McIntyre suggested (1990, p. 523) that student teachers rarely seek legitimization of their roles as professionals from their consultants. They attributed this to the lack of communication that occurs between student teachers and their consultants. Bhagat, et al. (1989, p. 8) stated that neither the cooperating teacher nor the student teacher viewed the supervisor as very credible. As the bond between the former two grew, the bond between the latter two weakened. Hall (1980, p. 115) reported that the least number of disagreements between the triad groups occurred between cooperating teachers and student teachers. He explained this by proposing that through their frequent interaction, student teachers and cooperating teachers are able to build a closer relationship than the consultant is able to develop with either party. This argument is

supported by the findings of Zimpher, et al. (1980) who stated that the familiarity between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher stems from their daily interaction. The consultant, who interacts with the other two members of the triad less frequently, will probably always be considered an outsider. However, they claimed that this position may allow the consultant the "freedom to be more analytical and constructively critical" (1980, p. 13).

The nature of the consultant's role in the supervision of student teachers has been cause for debate for a number of years. Bowman (1979, pp. 29-30) questioned the purpose and value of using consultants to supervise student teachers. He estimated that in a typical situation, the consultant spends a total of 100 minutes in observation of the student teacher over the course of an entire practicum. Due to this and other factors, Bowman concluded that the consultant does not have a significant role in the development of student teachers, and that "the most sensible plan would be to stop supervising" (p. 30). Koehler (1984, p. 11-12) noted that supervisors who took their classroom clinical role seriously expressed little satisfaction with their performance. Insufficient time to fulfill their perceived functions was seen by the consultants as an important factor. She added that supervisors at an institution where the consultants' role was redefined to focus on coordinating and providing support, had more realistic goals. The value of engaging consultants in "clinical supervision" has been questioned in more recent articles. Cole and Knowles (1993, p. 12) argued for a reconceptualizing of the consultant's role. They suggested that there should be a shift in the consultant's role from supervising classroom practice to supervising the process of student teaching.

There has, however, been at least an equal number of educators who have perceived the mentoring role as critically important. In 1981, Cohn described the typical supervisory visit as some variation of clinical supervision (p. 26). The visit had three basic purposes: to monitor and assess the student teacher's performance, to identify areas of difficulty and to offer assistance, and to keep in touch with the principals and cooperating teachers. She continued that the purposes of the practicum would be more effectively served by the "situational model" of supervision (pp. 27-30). This demands that the consultant continues methods instruction in the field to help student teachers draw relationships between ideas introduced previously and their classroom situation.

Bruneau (1993b) described acting as a mentor on matters of instruction and content as one of the consultant's critical roles. Both Bruneau (1993a, p. 16) and Spellman and Jacko (1990, pp. 27-28) have suggested that the work of the consultant, by its very nature, is different from that of the cooperating teacher, and that each makes different contributions. Garman (1986, p. 18) argued that the function of the consultant is to provide student teachers with collaborative help to encourage them to become "primary knowledge generators." She added that this demands prolonged interaction with the student teacher.

What consultants actually do in their conferencing role with student teachers has provided another focus for research. Zahorik (1988) identified three general types of supervision by the goals consultants set for the student teachers and the style of interaction they chose. Some consultants set their student teachers the goal of acquiring instructional and management skills. Others encouraged the

development of decision making skills. The third group identified promoted the acquisition of human relations sensitivity as their main objective.

Gitlin, Rose, Walther, and Magelby, (1985) and O'Connell Rust (1988) examined the content of consultant - student teacher conferences. The conclusion in both articles was that classroom management issues were discussed more frequently than any other topic. O'Connell Rust reported that 50% of entries made by consultants in their student teachers' journals concerned classroom management (pp. 59-60). Gitlin, et al. reported that management issues dominated consultants' conferences despite the beliefs they held (pp. 56-59).

Consultants conferencing styles are often described as directive/non-directive, or prescriptive/interpretive. To some extent consultants' conferencing styles are determined by their supervisory goals (Zahorik, 1988). The assumption that non-directive approaches to supervision are preferable is unfounded, Copeland (1982) argued. Student teacher preference regarding supervisory approach was seen to be dependent on their degree of confidence and experience. She concluded that as student teachers mature they may need less direction, and that consultants need to be sensitive to these changes (pp. 35-36).

The Consultant as Evaluator

The task of student teacher evaluation can present the consultant with serious dilemmas. Katz (1986, pp. 9-10) argued that the most serious conflicts for consultants arise out of the competing demands to provide student teachers with encouragement and support, and the demand to make honest and realistic assessments of their performance. Each

choice, she stated, has the potential for errors which could have long-range consequences. If the truth is withheld to allow the student teacher to grow in confidence, but no progress occurs, the consultant may feel reluctant to fail the student teacher later in the program. In many cases the consultant faces the choice of discouraging or failing a student who may have developed into a good teacher, or retaining a student ill-suited to a teaching career. Katz suggested that the conflict can be somewhat alleviated if the teacher education staff have explicated the program's ethical and professional demands to the student teachers at an early point in the course.

Yates (1981, p. 46) provided further evidence of the mismatch between the consultants' intentions and the student teachers' perceptions. He stated that student teachers perceived their consultants to be more concerned with evaluation than support.

Alternative approaches to encourage open relationships between consultants and student teachers which focus on formative, rather than summative, evaluation have been suggested. Katz and Raths (1992, p.378-379) proposed that formative and summative roles be separated by assigning coaching roles to some consultants, and evaluation roles to others. Practicum projects deploying school-based faculty members as consultants in nonevaluatory roles have also been tested (Samiroden, 1992).

Despite these dilemmas, Koehler (1984, p. 15) reported that none of the consultants she interviewed expressed a dislike of the duty of evaluating student teachers. However, their philosophy of grading on the basis of motivation and growth contrasted sharply with the evaluation forms they were required to complete. Most consultants in

Koehler's study revealed that they tended to "fudge" the evaluation forms.

Managing Problems

Acting as an intermediary in conflicts has been described as a critical aspect of the consultant's role (Bruneau, 1993b). The consultant is often the person that the student teacher and the cooperating teacher turn to for answers and suggestions when problems arise (Alvermann, 1981, p. 25).

Lasley, et al. (1986, pp. 135-138) grouped the problems confronted by consultants into three broad categories: dimensions of professionalism, program control, and institutional problems. They concluded that certain problems were beyond the control of consultants as they were the result of programmatic structures. Other problems, however, could be mitigated if consultants improved communication between the members of the triad.

Consultants' conferencing skills were perceived to be critical in situations where student teachers were unable or resistant to improving their classroom performance (Hoover, et al., 1988, p. 26). They added that the consultant must be prepared to feel uncomfortable in such situations, and accept this discomfort as a natural reaction. On occasion it is necessary to inform student teachers that they cannot be recommended for certification. The consultant's ability to communicate honestly, be empathetic, and remain professional, was seen as important in assisting both the student teacher and the consultant to cope with the situation.

There is considerable debate among educators regarding whether supervision of student teachers by practicum consultants is a practice worth continuing. Also questioned is the value of consultants' involvement in the evaluation of student teachers. Although consultants may adopt different approaches, issues of classroom management dominate conferences with student teachers. However, the literature suggests that when acting as intermediaries in conflicts, consultants appear to be able to make a significant contribution to the practicum.

Consultants' Attributes

"What skills do consultants need to fulfill their role effectively?" and "Who should be involved in the supervision of student teachers?" are questions which have received some attention in the literature. In this section I provide an overview of some of the research related to these questions.

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Attributes Required

Anderson (1990, pp. 7-10) described the knowledge and skills required by consultants. She argued that effective consultants possess certain knowledge and have special skills, attitudes, and attributes.

Two main bodies of knowledge which consultants need to know were identified:

1. An understanding of how university policy affects the goals of the teacher education program, including knowledge of the content of professional education courses.

2. Knowledge of the philosophical, psychological, and sociological foundations of education.

Two major skills, effective interpersonal communication and the ability to use evaluation processes appropriately, were also identified as necessary. Morehead, et al. (1988, p. 40) stated that "Fundamental to any supervisory process are certain skills that must be mastered." They believed that consultants require knowledge of effective instructional procedures, ability to promote trust in the supervisory relationship, communication skills, data collection skills, and conferencing skills.

Anderson (p. 10) also listed the five attitudes she considered to be most important. They were commitment to work, acceptance of the student teacher, trust, open-mindedness, and one of giving (especially of positive feedback). Other attributes noted were conscientiousness, the ability to be empathetic, tact, adaptability, healthy self-esteem, and humor. A similar list was compiled by Koehler (1984, p. 13) from interviews where she asked consultants to identify those qualities they believed were necessary to be an effective supervisor.

Effectiveness of Graduate Students as Consultants

There appears to be disagreement as to whether graduate students make effective practicum consultants. It has been suggested that, because graduate students are in the process of completing their own studies, this may detract from their performance as consultants (Watts, 1984, Samiroden, 1992). Samiroden stated that because of their other responsibilities, graduate students may appear uncooperative in responding to the requests of student teachers and cooperating teachers. Watts (pp. 31-32) commented that graduate students lack the standards of academic preparation, experience, teaching, and scholarly performance

required to be effective consultants. His recommendation was that there should be a mandatory and standardized certification system to ensure all teacher educators are appropriately prepared. Watts suggested that a doctorate in education, at least three years public school teaching experience, and an acceptable score on an examination of pedagogical knowledge be required for certification. Anderson (1990, pp. 5-6) adopted a similar position. She stated that many graduate students who are hired to supervise student teachers have not had any formal preparation in supervision. Graduate students also spend a very short period of time working in the practicum program, which is seen as reflecting negatively on the program. Considering the complex responsibilities and functions the consultant has to fulfill Anderson argued: "Should minimally trained . . . graduate students be allowed to supervise? Not if successful student teaching experiences and programs are the desired ends!"

Lamb and Montague (1982, p. 6) came to a different conclusion. They stated that universities are often criticized for using graduate students as consultants due to the belief that they are less qualified or more distracted than faculty members would be. Their study indicated that when student teachers were asked to evaluate the performance of their consultants, minimal differences in performance were recorded. Similar research was conducted by Neufeld (1992). Of the four subgroups of consultants (graduate students, faculty, practicum associates, and externals), graduate students were rated second in overall effectiveness.

Experience as a Factor in Effectiveness

Quality supervision is frequently associated with teaching experience. Anderson (1990, p. 5-10) argued, that although teaching experience is an important qualification of effective consultants, it should not be the only prerequisite for becoming a supervisor. Classroom teaching experience was regarded as just one of the two necessary facets of experience. The second experience recommended by Anderson for all new consultants was a supervisory internship.

Several other educators have examined the difference between experienced and non-experienced consultants. O'Connell Rust (1988, pp. 58-62) provided examples of the differences in performance and attitude between consultants with different levels of experience. New consultants were described as being tentative, unsure about how to respond to student teachers, intimidated by cooperating teachers older or more experienced than themselves, concerned about how the student teachers perceived them, about technical aspects of their work, and about their own survival. Experienced consultants drew on their supervisory training enabling them to examine the meaning of their own and their students' actions, and to orchestrate reflective dialogue.

The process of developing supervisory skills through experience has also been recognized by Garman (1986) and Lamb and Montague (1982). Garman commented that when consultants are less experienced there is a certain amount of "muddling through." (p. 18) However, over a period of time, consultants are able to reflect on their own practice and improve their supervisory skills. Lamb and Montague (pp. 9-10) suggested that supervisory experience was the most important factor in the perceived effectiveness of consultants. They concluded that

consultants can eventually improve their supervisory skills with experience in the supervision of student teachers.

Bruneau (1993, p. 17) suggested that all faculties of education should design an instrument for formally evaluating the quality of practicum supervision. Bruneau recommended that faculties of education could then develop a series of experiences for consultants who record relatively low scores on the evaluation instrument.

A familiarity with teacher education programs, pedagogical knowledge, and interpersonal skills have been identified as the attributes of greatest value to consultants. Some authors believe most graduate students do not possess, or are not in a position to apply, these attributes. Other research suggests that student teachers perceive graduate students as competent consultants. Previous supervisory experience appears to be a very significant factor in determining the effectiveness of consultants.

Commitment and Rewards

The problem of allocating time between supervision and other commitments is frequently documented in the literature. Koehler (1984) reported that consultants felt they had insufficient time to work with student teachers, which devalued their observation and feedback functions. Richardson-Koehler (1988) stated that consultants, caught between the demands of supervision and other work commitments, cannot spend the time necessary to develop a trusting relationship with student teachers. Zeichner and Liston (1987, p. 42) addressed the same issue. They argued that consultants, who were either professors with heavy teaching loads and research commitments or full-time graduate students

with study commitments, had inadequate time to perform the role. This belief is congruent with the argument of Samiroden (1992) cited in the previous section. It would appear that regardless of whether the consultants' role is to provide support, or to observe and provide feedback, a considerable time commitment is required.

Bowman (1979) argued that graduate students' commitment to practicum supervision is affected not only by time factors, but also because of their limited interest in the area. He stated, "Most [graduate students] have only a nominal interest in supervision; few of their dissertations deal with this subject. Almost without exception they would prefer a teaching assignment" (p. 29). In contrast, Bruneau (1993, p. 16) stated that many graduate students utilize the ideas that their practicum supervision provides for research purposes during their graduate programs.

Conflicting Study, Work, and Personal Commitments

For some graduate assistants, balancing commitments to course work and assistantship assignments represents a considerable challenge. Otto (1972, pp. 5-6) revealed that 133 of the 379 graduate teaching assistants who responded to his questionnaire believed that their assistantship detracted from their academic achievement.

Naeth (1991, pp. 46-47) recognized the conflicting demands of work and study, and the resultant stress. Outlined in her resource manual were techniques for time management and strategies for fulfilling responsibilities when there appeared to be insufficient time for their completion.

Motivation for Accepting Assistantship Awards

Otto (1972, pp. 8-9) identified money as the most important factor to graduate assistants in accepting assistantship positions. In many cases the financial support the assistantship offered made advanced study possible. Professional experience and career training ranked a close second.

Personal and Professional Rewards

Otto (1972) assessed the satisfaction of graduate students with their assistantships. He reported that almost an identical number of graduate students described their assistantships as "very rewarding" as did those who described it as "very unrewarding". Of the 365 graduate assistants surveyed, 126 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with any personal reward feelings (p. 7). However, referring to consultants in general, Bowman (1979, p. 29) said that most consultants find the activity personally rewarding. Koehler stated that the consultants said they valued seeing the growth of student teachers and working with people (1984, p. 12).

In terms of professional rewards Otto's 1972 survey revealed that 80% of the respondents indicated they derived some degree of professional reward (p. 6). Otto (p. 12) concluded that graduate students viewed an assistantship as an opportunity to develop professionally, as well as an opportunity for personal intellectual development.

The ability and willingness of graduate students to commit time to practicum supervision has been questioned by a number of educators. The difficulty of balancing study, personal and work commitments has also been recognized. Although most graduate students see an assistantship

as a means of supporting themselves during their studies, there are also personal and professional rewards accruing from their work.

Chapter Summary

The role of the consultant is complex and rather ambiguous. Performance of that role is influenced not only by organizational factors, but also by the personal beliefs of the consultant.

The ability to facilitate good communication between the school and the university is one of the most important aspects of the role. The literature suggests that universities need to better prepare consultants to undertake their supervisory responsibilities. For a number of years educators have questioned the value of consultants' contributions to the practicum, especially with reference to consultants' supervisory relationships with student teachers. The contribution of consultants is most appreciated when they act as mediators in disputes between practicum participants.

Effective consultants possess a wide range of skills and attributes. The most highly valued attribute is previous supervisory experience. Some educators question whether graduate students possess these skills, and whether graduate students exhibit sufficient commitment to the practicum. It has been noted that graduate students are in a difficult position of having to balance their commitment to their own studies and to their work as practicum consultants. There are, however, financial, professional, and personal rewards for graduate students who accept assistantships.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

In this chapter I present a discussion of the categories developed through analysis of the interview data. In doing so, I endeavor to present a representative description of the views and experiences of the consultants.

These categories are discussed under seven headings: Motivation for accepting consultant assistantship, the model, university relations, student teacher relations, school relations, the role, and rewards. Three themes--consultants' expectations and intentions, their experiences, and their expressed opinions--are interwoven into the discussion of these categories. The chapter begins with a description of the participants. This is necessary contextual information for readers.

The Participants

The five participants were full-time graduate students at the University of Alberta. All but one of the participants had been university facilitators or secondary faculty consultants in the practica programs in the Winter term of 1992. Three of the participants had been faculty consultants in previous years, and two of those three had also been cooperating teachers in the past. Consequently, they all had some experience supervising student teachers, although the extent of that experience ranged from 4 months to 12 years.

The participants cited a number of personal attributes they believed better equipped them to perform the task of practicum

consultant. Most of the participants indicated that they thought their ability to communicate with people, to be a "people person," was their greatest asset. Ranked second in importance was their past teaching experience, which ranged from 4 to 12 years. Other attributes and previous experiences which they regarded as valuable included leadership ability, experiences obtained during their formal education, and their own experiences as a student teacher.

As one might expect, the graduate students felt different degrees of preparedness to assume the role of practicum consultant. Some were quite confident:

> I spent a lot of my time working with teachers, helping them develop their programs, helping them change their methodologies, whatever, whatever their needs were. That was my role, to help and facilitate that. I've been doing that for quite a while, and I suppose when I came here, I was used to that to a certain extent.

Other graduate students were less confident initially. "I didn't feel very prepared to go into the situation at all. . . . I didn't feel qualified to go in because I only had four or five years of teaching experience."

Motivation for Accepting Consultant Assistantship

Four of the five graduate students indicated that at least part of the motivation for the application or acceptance of an assistantship was financial. "Well, if I take just the current situation, being a student at the U of A, I need some form of on-going support in terms of income to be able to afford to stay here." For some, their becoming practicum consultants was not a decision of their own making:

> I didn't know that this would be my assistantship. I just applied to the department for an assistantship because I didn't have any money. And when I came here they told me this would be one of my

> duties. . . . I didn't make a specific choice and say this is what I want to do.

Others, however, felt a particular desire to be involved in student teacher supervision.

> Being a teacher at heart, body, and soul, I suppose the teaching and the supervision were really the only two that appealed to me. . . . So that's why I chose to do the supervision, because I thought it would satisfy a need to support and help teachers.

As certain consultants found themselves becoming engrossed in their role, their primary source of motivation changed. When I repeated a comment from an earlier conversation a consultant replied:

> I said that the initial motivation was financial? I might have. . . . But for me it changed to more of a feeling that I could contribute something to somebody's program. Almost like watching someone grow up. So if it was a scale on a graph, I would probably say finance initially was very important, but as time progresses, more like a balance, of commitment to quality education.

The identified sources of motivation therefore varied not only between individuals, but also as time progressed.

The Model

The phrase "the model" is meant to refer to the methods of organizing the student teachers' practicum experience. Although various pilot schemes were tested during the 1992-1993 academic year, there were two main practica models: the new elementary practicum model, and the secondary practicum model. The participants in this study worked within the structure of one of these two models.

The consultants' experiences were affected inevitably by the organizational structure within which they operated. Consequently, each participant commented on their expectations and their experiences

working within their respective systems, and expressed their opinions on aspects of the organization of the practicum.

There were a number of issues discussed by practicum consultants relating to the practicum model within which they worked. These are discussed under the headings: School Selection and Student Placement, Timing and Duration of the Practicum, Observation of Student Teachers, Evaluation of Student Teachers, Role Definition, The Concept of Reflection, School Support of the Model, and School Control in the Model.

School Selection and Student Placement

The selection of practica sites was recognized as a difficult task for the Office of Field Experiences. There was a feeling that it was not always possible to select the schools which could offer student teachers the most positive experience.

> If Field Services had total control over the selection of schools, I think they'd be in better shape. . . . But their hands are somewhat tied in that [name of school district] makes the decisions on who gets the student teachers. And a lot of the time it's a squeaky wheel thing, or political decision.

The university had some control over the placement of student teachers within the district. The university did, however, have to select placements from a list of schools which had been approved by a senior administrator. Organizational difficulties were also seen as having an impact on preparation, from both the school and the consultants' perspectives.

> It [student teacher placement] was organized at the end of December I think, before school was let out. But in that school, the teachers didn't know until the first week of January. So, as one teacher said to me who had a student the first six weeks, if she would have had more time, more warning, more indication that

> they were coming, she would have been able to wrap things up differently in December.

Similar problems were encountered in the placement of student teachers, and conveying these placements to the consultants. "This time I didn't receive their names until about three days before I was to meet them. . . . So the times to meet [before the practicum] were very limited." Some of the university facilitators found they were directly involved in placement of student teachers with school facilitators if the schools had not finalized arrangements. "I had to go knock on doors and say, hey, would you take a student teacher?"

The consultants tended to favor the notion of placing a cohort of student teachers in a single school, the placement system employed in the elementary practicum.

> I think the stuff they're doing in elementary is exciting. I think that's the way of the future, or it should be the way in the future, with cohort groups going into the schools. One of my student teachers was devastated to find out she'd be the only student at her school.

When a student teacher - cooperating teacher mis-match occurred, decisions needed to be made. However, the decision to move a student teacher was not a decision that most consultants felt they should make.

> If a change of placement has to occur . . . the people at Field Experiences do that. I can have input into that in the sense that I can talk to the people at practicum placements . . . but I don't think I have any authority to say, that should happen.

Three of the consultants expressed the opinion that there should be some system for evaluating placement sites. They felt that if both student teachers and practicum consultants submitted short evaluations of the schools at which they worked, it might be possible to build a directory of the most suitable placement sites.

Timing and Duration of the Practicum

All of the university facilitators expressed concern that, for those student teachers whose elementary practicum was in the second term, the experience came too late in their teacher preparation program. One stated:

> I'm not too keen that they have this practicum, which is now the only significant practicum in our program, come in the last term of the last year. That's a little too late to find out that you're not cut out to be a teacher.

The pressure to pass the practicum in order to complete their degree left some student teachers unable to "reflect upon [their] teaching abilities, and what was going on."

Although the consultants recognized that student teachers had the opportunity to do volunteer work in schools to gain experience, this was not regarded as a solution to the problem.

> All of them, you know, have done stuff in schools usually, like gone and volunteered as a teacher aid. But a lot of times they just end up photocopying or observing. They don't experience what it's like to have the responsibility for kids, you know. So they don't get a feel for what teaching is like.

Some consultants saw the duration of the practicum as inadequate:

> I feel really frustrated for the student teachers because they are under incredible pressure. They've put four years of their finance and their life into preparing for this, and at the end of eight weeks, one eight week block they're expected to be at that sort of minimum level of competence ready to go into the classroom. And I just think it's unfair.

Consequently, most of the consultants believed that the practicum component of the teacher preparation program should be extended. One commented:

> I think a minimum of 24 weeks for the practicum is essential. They have 12 weeks here--eight weeks and four weeks. I think that needs to be doubled, and it needs to be inclusive of first year to fourth year.

Observation of Student Teachers

University facilitators in the elementary practicum experienced some conflict regarding the redefined role of observation. They felt the demands of student teachers and cooperating teachers were not always congruent with the recommendations of the 1992/93 Interim Handbook which stated:

> While the evaluation of the student teacher is collaborative in nature, the University Facilitator will be available to monitor lessons and provide feedback on the invitation of the student teacher, on the request of the School Facilitator, or on the initiation of the University Facilitator.

A university facilitator said:

> I'll stay after the classes start maybe, and observe a class or two if they ask me to, because that's not really my role anymore, to observe and evaluate. But sometimes the student teacher wants me to. You know, they say, 'I'm doing this particular lesson. Why don't you come and see,' because they want the feedback. So then I do that. . . . I went, even though it wasn't really supposed to be our role.

One facilitator resolved the conflict by saying that participating in student teacher observations was responding to the needs of the school, which is an important element of the elementary practicum model: "When the teachers give me a schedule and say watch this person at this time, etc., I take that as, well, they're requesting me to do so. And so I'm quite happy to be requested to do so."

The facilitators believed that spending more time in the classroom than the model recommended produced positive results:

> The feedback I got from my student teachers and from the staff was that this is wonderful that you're here so often, and that you are spending so much time in the school. They really felt, like I said, there was a bond, there was a kind of confidence.

The need to spend time in student teacher observation was perceived as more important whenever a potential problem arose. The

university facilitators felt that in order to be in a position to offer suggestions for dealing with problems, they needed to acquire for themselves some understanding of the situation. The university facilitators believed that this was best achieved through classroom observation of student teachers.

Evaluation of Student Teachers

Another issue which proved a source of conflict for consultants, and especially for university facilitators in the elementary practicum, was the evaluation of student teachers. In the secondary practicum, faculty consultants and cooperating teachers work relatively independently in writing evaluations of their student teachers. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the evaluation of student teachers in the elementary practicum is a collaborative effort involving school and university facilitators. This arrangement was regarded as somewhat problematic by some university facilitators. A facilitator stated: "You're supposed to be part of the final evaluation, yet you're not part of the evaluation all along. And that seems kind of contrary." They added:

> When the university facilitator takes a role in the evaluation, and the facilitator's name goes on the evaluation, I think that they should be watching the student teachers to a certain extent. Not that they have to be in there every week, but 10 minutes here and there, in my opinion, isn't enough time to really gain an understanding and appreciation of what the student teacher is doing.

However, one facilitator did see particular advantages:

> Actually, this practicum model is a lot less administrative hassle for the university consultant than it used to be where the university consultant had to do these formal observations, and formal evaluations, and document all that. . . . [Now] the staff does a collaborative evaluation of the students, and then I read

> those evaluations. And as long as I don't have any big complaint with them, I just sign them--sign off on it.

Writing the student teacher evaluations was regarded by all the consultants as a very important task: "In this system, the way this system is set up, that piece of paper makes them or breaks them. So you've got to be really careful." Another consultant said: "I'm in the position where I know if I write them a bad report, they've got no hope in hell of getting a job, ever." All the consultants felt the need to be "specific" and "correct" in their wording of the evaluations.

A number of the university facilitators had interesting experiences when working collaboratively on the evaluations:

> I did my evaluations in two different ways. They said this was supposed to be a collaborative affair and so the one evaluation we did in a way I would say would be totally collaborative. . . . We [the facilitator and the two cooperating teachers] took what we had in point-form and put it into sentence form, as part of the evaluation. And we found that just was not practical. It took us over three hours to do this one evaluation.

Another facilitator explained what occurred when a school facilitator produced a draft evaluation which was written in point-form.

> I started rewriting it. Basically I just took the points, and started putting them in sentences. . . . [An hour and 10 minutes later] I went back to his room, and by that time I was done, and I got him, and he came and read it over. I don't know if he was very impressed that I had written it in sentences, but I explained my point of view.

There was some feeling that the evaluation process was, perhaps, a little too lenient. One consultant suggested that the standards for passing should be raised.

Role Definition

The participants were asked to define how they perceived their role as consultants. Initially, some of the consultants felt they were unable to provide a clear description of their role. One consultant commented on the section regarding faculty consultants in the secondary practicum handbook:

> I would look, and I thought this looks all nice and rosy, doesn't it? And then I thought that's all very well, but it doesn't tell me what a faculty consultant does. . . . In terms of what our principal role in the school with these students was, I didn't think it gave a really clear indication of what I should be doing. . . . And I was really staggered at the expectations that the students had of the faculty consultant in comparison to what was written in this book. . . . And so I thought that the only way I'm going to learn anything about this, what the faculty consultant does, is not through asking anybody, because nobody could really tell me. They could tell me what they did, and the stories varied enormously in terms of what they did.

A secondary faculty consultant stated, "I suppose, if you ask me to define my role I'd have difficulty in doing that because it's different in each context with different actors, or different people within those contexts." A similar sentiment was reiterated by a university facilitator:

> Actually that's really yet to evolve. I went in with just this kind of skeleton role. I have told the students and the school facilitators that they can help define the role as they perceive me. . . . I think that's an important part of the model, that the school develops its own agenda and helps define the role of the school facilitator and the university facilitator.

For these facilitators in the new elementary practicum model, there may have been some difficulty adjusting to the new role. One facilitator believed this prompted the university Field Experiences personnel to:

> Work harder the second term, working with the university facilitator. . . . You know, to try to improve that situation of different expectations. It wasn't perfect this term, but

> everybody seems to feel it went a lot better this term than it did last term.

All the elementary facilitators agreed there was a need for further clarification of the facilitator's role. One facilitator suggested that a specific handbook for facilitators might help.

The Concept of Reflection

One of the main issues for practicum consultants concerned the concept of reflective teaching. This was especially true in the experiences of university facilitators, where encouraging student teachers to reflect was an important aspect of the new model. In certain situations, the facilitators found support for this practice.

> In this new model, each student teacher is supposed to be given one period of school time per day to be set aside for reflection. And certain schools think, well, this is no problem. We'll just put this reflection time into their day.

The facilitators felt that some of the student teachers also thought the time to reflect was valuable.

> The feedback I'm getting from the student teachers is that they really appreciate that half hour a day to do some writing in their journals about what was going on in the day, to deal with the stress, plus to get to think about their actions, and maybe make some change along the way.

However, there was some resistance to the concept from the schools:

> In some schools they don't want to do that because they think that a real teacher doesn't get time during the day to reflect, so why should a student teacher be given that privilege. And they say, 'Oh well, if they want to reflect they can reflect at seven o'clock in the morning, or, you know, four o'clock in the afternoon.' And they didn't want that time put into the schedule.

and from some student teachers:

> I think there are certain people that need to be taught to do that [reflect], and be encouraged to do it, and as I've seen with this one student, actually forced to go out of the classroom and do this.

The consultants also regarded the ability of student teachers to be reflective as valuable.

> I'm just going to say that the one student that wasn't able to reflect did not have a successful practicum, so it really made a difference. . . . If a student teacher can't see what things they can improve on, it's very hard for someone else to say.

> I really like the idea of the model in that student teachers spend time throughout the practicum teaching, observing, and reflecting, rather than the whole idea of, well, we're going to work the student teacher really hard. . . I don't think the purpose is to see how tired we can make them.

They all believed that how one encourages a student teacher to engage in reflection was important:

> To try and force them to do it [reflect] . . . just kind of goes against the idea of reflectiveness. Because if you force them, and say OK, you're going to think about this for the next 20 minutes, then it loses some of it's power I think.

> It's [reflection] sometimes called the 'r' word amongst the undergraduates because of the way it's been broached. I think that's our fault to a degree, because some staff kind of treat it as an assignment--you will reflect, and you'll do it right now, and we'll give you a grade on it, and turned it into an assignment when it should be a natural process.

A similar attitude was found amongst student teachers towards required journals. Consequently, although most of the consultants appreciated the value of student teachers of keeping a journal, few made it a requirement.

> I don't want them to necessarily write in a journal. I find that, from the feedback from the student teachers, that they've been journalized to death. I mean, they write a journal for everything and they've really had more than enough of it.

However, there was some support amongst the consultants that student teachers keep a required journal, if the student teachers were provided

with "reflection time." As such, the consultants were confronted with the problem of ensuring that reflection time was constructively used, without making the process appear as a chore.

School Support of the Model

For facilitators in the elementary practicum program, school support of the model was regarded as crucially important in determining their experiences as consultants. Early in the term a facilitator said:

> The staff at this school is really keen for the new model and have fully accepted their role, so that to this point, they haven't been making very much demand on my time. That has allowed me to spend more time with the students.

The successful experiences the facilitators enjoyed were largely attributed to the presence of a key coordinator on the school staff. In one school it was an administrator:

> Like in the last school, it was the principal, and she was excellent. She would talk to people about taking student teachers. Like she dialogued, and she went and spoke, and she even bounced names off me first of all.

In another school it was a member of the teaching staff:

> This lady was really, really interested in it. And that's the key too. There are certain people in the schools that are really interested in the practicum, and in the student teachers, and if you're lucky enough to have someone in the school that's really interested, then that's wonderful.

The strength of the support for the model was indicated by a facilitator who related how the administration of one school justified not selecting staff members this year, who had been cooperating teachers previously, by saying: "This was a new practicum round, and they were intentionally selecting teachers who weren't tied into the old model, to try and give this practicum a real impartial start." The facilitators

did encounter a few cooperating teachers who were not in full support of the changes made to the elementary practicum program. One is reported as stating: "I've had many student teachers in the past under the old model, and I much prefer the old model." For the elementary facilitators, the greatest problem that could confront them was:

> Being placed in a school that isn't supportive, or a school that doesn't understand the model. And I think, by far that's the biggest problem. I mean, if you want to have a rough time in this job, then that's the placement. If you have problems with students but you have a strong school, I think it's a lot easier. . . . It's pretty hard as one person from the university to go into a school and say here's a new model, and be in a school which isn't receptive, and try to do the sell job.

Another facilitator suggested:

> So much depends on the school that you're in, and the interest they take. In some ways it would be nice if they knew in advance more about the practicum before they made a decision to participate in it. . . . because it is a commitment if you're going to do it right.

In situations where schools were committed, the benefits were evident to the facilitators.

> The schools that like it, like it like crazy. You know what I mean? It's like if you get into it, and you like it, then you think it's great. . . . [The model] has the potential to give the school a real sense of pride in that they are helping to train student teachers.

One facilitator suggested that the issue of school support of the model should be the most influential factor in determining whether graduate students should be employed as consultants.

> I think it's pretty hard, especially as a graduate student, to go into a school, and try to change their perceptions of the curriculum, and do the big sell job. . . . I think if you're Dr. Somebody, or professor Somebody from the university, maybe it would be easier.

As such, the approach of the school towards the model was a very important issue for the facilitators.

School Control in the Model

Another concept in the new elementary practicum model was that the school should be able to exercise greater control over the student teacher's practicum experience. In the experience of the participants in this study, school personnel appeared be the main force in directing events. Towards the middle of the practicum round a facilitator said:

> Well, basically, there was one woman who took ownership in the school for the practicum, and that seemed to work really well. . . . This woman understood the practicum, and so basically I've just said, here it is, and you take ownership, and so she has worked things out.

The experiences of the facilitators seemed to suggest that the schools appreciated being able to extend their control over the practicum:

> They [the principal and the vice-principal] had said that everybody else had liked the new practicum, and they liked the role of the university facilitator as supportive, rather than supervisory, and they liked having ownership of the practicum.

There were times, however, where the facilitator felt it was necessary to strongly recommend that the school follow the model as had been determined by the university. Facilitators seemed to feel it was their responsibility to see that the schools exercised their freedom within the guidelines of the model.

> It's really wide open for the school to decide what they want to do. And I think it is my job as a facilitator to see, OK, this is what the school is doing, does that fit into the model? Then if I think that sounds fair enough as far as what is written in the model, then they just go with it.

When asked to give an opinion on the impact of the schools commanding greater control, one facilitator replied, "I think that's probably both a strength and a weakness in the model, given the political situation that exists with the selection of schools." The new

model was seen as helping "to create a little better relationship with the university." The facilitators believed that there were certain schools that "just weren't into the model at all, and really wished things were done the way they used to be done."

> They understand the procedure, but they don't really get into the philosophy where the school takes ownership and responsibility. Of if they do, they think it's a cop-out from the university, rather than, you know, a benefit to them.

The "model" was an influential factor in shaping the participants experiences, especially those experiences of the elementary university facilitators. For the university facilitators, their role in student teacher observation was somewhat problematic because of the perceived incongruence between the policy in the practicum handbook and the demands of student teachers and school facilitators. Similarly, some university facilitators experienced difficulties reconciling university policy with their sense of personal responsibility in the evaluation of student teachers. University facilitators regarded school support of the elementary practicum to be a crucially important factor in determining the success of the practicum, and the nature of their experiences. All the university facilitators encouraged the schools to take greater control of the practicum, and saw this as a positive feature of the elementary practicum model.

Most of the consultants stated that student teachers should acquire more classroom experience during their teacher education programs. Practicum consultants in both secondary and elementary practica expressed some uncertainty regarding their role description. All of the consultants encouraged student teachers to reflect on their practice, but the university facilitators were concerned about the manner in which "reflective practice" was promoted.

University Relations

The consultants perceived that they were at the center of a triangle, having to interact and form relationships with three separate groups, one of which was university personnel. This section is divided into four parts, dealing with preparation provided by the university, facilitator meetings, university expectations, and university support of consultants.

Preparation Provided by the University

As suggested earlier, a number of the consultants were unsure as to how to interpret their role. Referring to preparing to fulfill the role, one facilitator said:

> Well, we all have the document that describes the model--the handbook. But actually, I think, first term they weren't thorough prior to the commencement of the practicum at getting the university facilitators together and kind of workshopping a bit on that new model. They just kind of assumed that everybody, you know, would just read it, and would automatically be into it.

Another consultant reiterated this sentiment:

> Coming into the university for the first time, I wasn't sure what a faculty consultant at the U of A did. I was told, well, here's a book, read the book, and in there is what the faculty consultant does. . . . I've had no contact at all with anyone who's talked to me about how to do my job as a faculty consultant.

One consultant was able to gain some preparation through a course option:

> One of the options that they had on the timetable was a course in supervision of educational personnel. . . . And when I spoke to the Prof. about it, I realized that it was really oriented for the supervision of student teachers in schools, and it was the course that was set up for people like myself who were going to become faculty consultants. And I thought, oh well, that's good. I'll enroll and see what it says. And I enjoyed the course. . . . It certainly gave me the opportunity to explore a whole lot of areas that I wanted to explore.

However, not all the consultants received the information that such a course was available. As one consultant commented, "I never heard anything about this class [until mid-term]. I really would have liked to have been part of that all throughout that term." There was a sense that some of the consultants would have appreciated a little more guidance from the university; all the consultants stated that some additional preparation, whether it be in the form of courses, workshops, seminars, or meetings, could have been provided.

Facilitator Meetings

Interaction between consultants sometimes occurred on a casual basis and in organized meetings. Some consultants were able to find support from regularly talking to colleagues:

> Actually it was really nice that one of the facilitators was someone that I was taking courses with, and so it was, you know, 'You're a university facilitator? So am I. So we spent a lot of time trying to figure things out between the two of us, and that was a lot of help.

In the experience of another, "there was no collegial support or interaction at all." The consultants' experiences of the formally organized meetings were somewhat different. Some comments were positive: "It was interesting for me. . . . You get to hear some stories of things, incidents going on in the different schools." Another said, "The first time was at the beginning of the role . . . and we started talking a little bit about expectations. And that was good." In the experience of others, the meetings were less valuable. When asked to comment on whether they felt as if they gained much from the meeting, a consultant replied: "No, not really, because I didn't have any concerns." A second consultant responded to the same question:

"No, it's just more like a little work group kind of thing where you hear other peoples' problems and think, 'Thank God I'm not having that problem.'" One consultant reported how:

> The meeting before there were five of us, and the meeting after, only two of us showed up. So there wasn't a lot of--I don't know if it was good communication that this could be important, or not. Support from the university saying, yes, this is important, and we appreciate your time.

The timing of the meetings was, in the opinion of some of the consultants, very important.

> Well I've found that last term they didn't have a meeting 'till later in the term, and it would have been more helpful earlier in the term. This term, since I already knew what was going on the meetings weren't as valuable.

However, all of the consultants thought the meetings had some value. One consultant said that they thought the university should bring the consultants together more often. Another suggested a meeting at the beginning of term between inexperienced and experienced consultants.

Others believed the meetings were of greater value to the university than to the consultants.

> I think it has more, it has some value, to the Director of the practicum because this [the meeting] is really the main point of contact with us, especially on hearing the good things. If someone is having problems they'll seek him or her out, and so he or she will get that information. But as far as hearing what's going well, you know, and what aspects of the model seem to be working really well in different settings, this is where he or she gets a chance to do this.

Most of the consultants indicated that they favored the continuation of organized meetings.

University Expectations

All the consultants commented on the expectations that they felt the university held of them. They appreciated that changes were occurring in the practicum, and described their roles as evolving: "I think that my role is changing. The whole perception of the practicum within Student Services is changing, and their expectations are changing."

This feeling was especially strong for university facilitators working in the elementary practicum, where the fulfillment of the new practicum model generated additional expectations. In the experiences of some, these expectations were not always totally realistic:

> Their big expectation was just to make sure that their new model was fulfilled. And since it was a new model starting in September, there was a responsibility from the university to see that the teachers understood what this new model was. Now, in September, that was difficult for somebody coming from outside, because we ourselves weren't really sure what the new model was.

The idea that the facilitator engage in collaborative work with teachers within the school was also somewhat problematic:

> I am willing to spend more time at the school than they [the teachers] really have time to be with me. I mean, they're very busy. . . . The last thing they want from me is me scheduling more of their time.

However, this facilitator added:

> If they choose to make that a permanent part of the model, that the university facilitator will work with the teachers in a supportive way in areas that they deem appropriate, and scheduling is at their discretion, then I'd say that's realistic, and that's a beneficial part of the model.

University Support of Consultants

As the university was the organization which the consultants served, at certain times the consultants would look to, or expect

support from, the parent organization. Shortly after the beginning of the practicum one consultant said, "At this point, I haven't needed them for anything, but I probably will before it's over. . . . It's more like that I'm confident that it's there."

The consultants expected that this contact would be crucial if a problem arose. But when such situations occurred, not all the consultants felt that they received the degree of support they had hoped for:

> There was some support, but not enough. And after we had, the school and myself, had made a decision about what we were going to do, after we had acted on our decision, then we seemed to get more help from the university.
>
> I know in my position, I was kind of on my own to decide what I was going to decide to do. And so it was myself and the school that basically figured out what we were going to do, and so it was the school that was the major support group.

There were occasions when some of the consultants would like to have been better informed about the student teachers they were supervising. Sometimes there are a few student teachers who have had problems in past practicums, or about whom university personnel have some concerns regarding their ability to pass the practicum.

> My response was, I wish I would have known that before. But I guess I see their point too, maybe to keep confidentiality in mind, and I understand that. But on the other hand I wasn't going to tell anybody. It was just for my own benefit to know, to get some background on this student, and it would have influenced, I think, some earlier decisions I might have made. Retroactively I believe that it would have.

Other consultants believed that the university could have played a larger role in informing the schools of major decisions. They also felt that the university could have taken more responsibility in liaising with the school in delicate situations, knowing that the consultants

would have to continue working with the school personnel for the rest of the practicum round.

When a serious problem presented itself, one consultant explained:

> I felt somebody from the university should go out and watch this particular student, and see what was going on, and nobody did. And then when it came down to the crunch, in some ways I felt that my professional opinion was being questioned, that my professional integrity was also being questioned.

However, this was not the experience of all the consultants. Another consultant described how Curriculum Instructors had been informed of student teachers having difficulties. In some cases the Curriculum Instructors visited the student teachers themselves, and spoke to the cooperating teachers, to form their own opinion of the situation.

Although there were occasions where the consultants may have desired more support, they all indicated that they had sought and received university assistance:

> When I've needed to, I haven't hesitated to phone somebody. You need to phone other people and talk to them about what's going on. They've been, you know, receptive to talk to me, so that hasn't been a problem.

> From the point of view of the contacts that I've had with the Curriculum Instructors for instance, when I've had difficult students to work with. . . I couldn't ask for more.

Often the support came from someone other than the consultant's direct supervisor, depending on the contacts that they had made. Familiarity with the program and its personnel appears to increase the degree of support the consultants felt was available to them:

> When you're new to a university, and you're new to a program, you don't know anybody, and so you don't know who to go to. But I mean, even after you've been here for a semester, you get an idea of who does what, and then so you know who to go to when you need certain things.

Another consultant suggested that it may be necessary to actively seek that support.

> This year I've kind of made a nuisance of myself and got to know some people quite well. But if I hadn't taken the initiative to do that then I wouldn't know them at all. And I think that's very unfortunate because . . . they're very helpful people.

Some of the consultants expressed opinions as to how the situation could be improved and their sense of isolation reduced. One said consultants should "make the university more aware of some of our needs, and the support services that we need." Another suggested:

> I think there has to be something that facilitators can do if they're having real problems, and a network where they can go to someone, especially as a graduate student. I don't know all the policies of Field Experiences, and I don't know the practicum model inside and out, because that's not what I came here for. This is just part of my job, and I think if someone is having major problems, either with a school or with students, that there should be a place that they can go and maybe certain policies that they can follow to deal with these problems.

In summary, most of the participants were somewhat unsure of their role when assuming their supervisory responsibilities. Those participants who attended meetings arranged for consultants felt that meetings early in the term were most valuable. All the consultants received support from the university at various times, but would have appreciated that support being more readily available.

Student Teacher Relations

A second point in the consultants' triangle is the relationships they form with the student teachers with whom they work. Three aspects of this relationship are presented in this section: providing student teachers with support, consultants' conferencing and observing roles, and problem management.

Providing Student Teachers With Support

As well as assisting student teachers in the development of their professional skills, the consultants saw it as their role to lend support, in a general sense, to the student teachers. In their experience, this became one of their major functions.

Initial meetings between consultants and their student teachers were described as informal, and usually took place before, or very shortly after, the practicum round began.

> When I have my pre-meeting with them before they even get into the schools, I sort of share with them what the final report looks like. . . . We talk about what they mean, and what they might like to do in the schools, but it doesn't become an issue.

> I went to their initial seminar they had. Just before it was over I met with them, and talked to them for about half an hour, 40 minutes. It was really informal. . . . I just talked to them about, you know, who I am, and what I'm doing.

> When I meet them I tell them right out that I'm a graduate student. You know, I don't try and tell them that I'm a long time teacher, I'm an expert from the university. But I make sure that I mention to them that I'm a graduate student so that they realize that they don't have to be afraid of me.

As the practicum progressed, and the student teachers began to encounter problems, the demand for support increased. Many of the consultants talked of the phone calls they received:

> When she phones me, you know, I'm doing 90% of the listening, just because she has a need to tell someone what's happening. She doesn't really have a support service where she can go and vent what's happening, to see what's happening. So, I try and do my best to give her emotional support.

The consultant often acts as a confidante. "The student teacher was confiding in me to a great extent as to what was actually going on, and some of the frustrations that she was feeling." One consultant gave an account of an informal get-together at a local restaurant, with the consultant's three student teachers:

> Well, I get there, and there's an extra student there . . . there's two of my student teachers and an extra student. And my other student teacher came with about seven other student teachers. So there was a group of, I would say, 12 student teachers at that table with me. And they were just all firing questions back and forth. And so out of that I realized what it was for them to get together in a social setting. So that it proved a growing experience for them because they could see that they weren't alone, but that other student teachers were experiencing the exact same thing as they were.

Their experiences led some consultants to make strong statements regarding their role:

> I feel that my role is trying to get the student teachers through this process at all costs. You try to help them to reach some sort of goal, feeling comfortable and safe in their classroom. And that's hard too.

> I'm becoming more aware of the issues that they're dealing with, and not just me, or not just the cooperating teacher, or the kids, but themselves. I judge them, I look at them from a totally different perspective than I did a year ago.

Consultants' Conferencing and Observing Roles

How the consultants described what they did in their observation of, and conferences with, the student teachers varied considerably, even among those working within the same model.

> What I do is I watch them teaching, I take notes, and I talk to them about their lessons, always emphasizing the positives. . . . Give them a couple of things to work on for their next week, but always start off with asking, 'how do you think that went?'

> What I do now is I go out there probably three or four days a week, and I get there about half an hour before school starts, I get there at eight, and I catch them when they come in there. We sit down individually to talk about situations in each of their classroom. . . . And then maybe every two weeks, I sit in on a bit of their classroom situation.

What the consultants do in their visitations is seemingly influenced by how they perceive the cooperating teacher - student teacher relationship. Where the cooperating teacher was very involved, one consultant said:

> He's getting a lot more feedback about his lessons and so on from the cooperating teacher than he's getting from me. But those sort of snap shot visits once a week that I go in for, you know, two hours, two and a half hours, whatever time I'm there, I'll share with him some alternative ways of doing things.

Whereas in situations where the cooperating teacher appeared less active, a consultant described how:

> I sat down and we talked through the whole three pages. And she was just so happy. And I thought to myself, I'm really slashing this lesson. I'm critiquing it to its utmost, and she was so appreciative because she said it was the first time someone told her what she was doing in the classroom and what are some other methods she could use. And she was so excited. She said, 'I'm going to try this tomorrow. I'm going to try this tomorrow.' I just thought, she's not getting support.

Consultants also varied their approach in accordance with the individual needs of their student teachers.

> For [two students] there was a lot more instruction involved. I was very non-directive with three of the five of them, but I found I needed to be, not so much directive, but I needed to provide a lot more input in the case of two other students.

In the experience of all the consultants, a lot of time is spent in conversation with the student teacher.

> I spend a lot of time talking about how to plan lessons. I spend a lot of time talking about different ways of arranging a classroom and why arrange a classroom.
>
> Today, I spent three quarters of an hour this afternoon, just talking about--one of the kids asked me, 'How do you have the desks arranged in your classroom? Why do you have them arranged that way? Does it create difficulties as far as management goes?'

Although all the consultants stated that they enjoyed their observing and conferencing role, it was not without its frustrations, as one consultant explained:

> Part is the frustration of--I'd love to be able to share my knowledge of and experience of planning and preparing lessons with these people, and so on. But, I don't want to do it in a snippet of a 15 minute interview before a lesson, or after a lesson, or whatever. . . . Ideally, I'd like to work with them

> prior to the round, to work through lesson planning, and do some lesson planning, and do some lesson structuring.

In addition to performing these duties, individual consultants assumed various other responsibilities. One consultant said they had assumed the "responsibility to ensure that the student teachers were keeping a logbook, and that they were writing proper lesson plans." Another spoke of holding weekly morning sessions which involved the student teachers "sharing reflections previously shared with their school facilitators."

Consultants also adopted various approaches in their on-going evaluation of the student teachers. One consultant's approach was to:

> Try and make sure that every week I give the student teachers some sort of indication as to where I think, or how I think they fit in relation to the sorts of criteria I use to assess them on at the end of the practicum. . . . If they're astute, they'll realize that's what I'm doing.

Encouraging the student teachers to do self-evaluations was very popular amongst the consultants. However, most of the consultants found that the student teachers were harder on themselves than they or the cooperating teachers were. One consultant commented on a student teacher's self-evaluation:

> Often it was incredibly critical of herself, and I think my role in that situation was more the, 'lets bring the balance back into this assessment', because it was too negative, too critical. No, it wasn't negative, it was just too critical. It wasn't indicative of the real situation.

All the consultants had positive things to say about their experiences in terms of the quality of the relationship that they developed with their student teachers. One consultant said: "We develop a real, not social connection, but a personal connection, where it's now more of a collegial unit." Another commented: "The student

teachers I had last term, they were really more like friends." A consultant suggested that their age and status may have been influential in helping to build such relationships:

> I think part of that came from the fact that I'm really not that much older than these student teachers . . . and also I'm a student. . . . One said, you know, you're one of us. And so they felt as though I was, in a way, a part of their group.

But, there are occasions where consultants feel that the student teacher is not totally comfortable with the relationship.

> You get the occasional--I mean I've had student teachers when I've been doing that debriefing session, you can see and know that they almost feel obligated, it's a sense that they almost feel obligated to say something positive about something that I've done. And it's not genuine.

Despite such occasions, one consultant aptly summarized the general opinion of all the consultants: "I'm not sure what sort of comfort level you can get anyway when you know this person is coming in to watch you, but I would say, generally they felt really comfortable with it."

Problem Management

The experience of mediating in, or managing, a conflict between practicum participants was regarded by the consultants as a particularly significant event.

Although the consultants expressed concern where problems were anticipated, they were prepared to confront the problems and believed that they were equipped to handle them:

> I would liken it to be a situation where you don't have to play the peacemaker, but if need be, I would do that. . . . I'm not a

> confrontational person unless it comes to the point where I feel that there's something drastically wrong going on. And like I feel tactful enough, that I'm enough of a facilitator--I hate that word but it works here--to work with it.

Some of the consultants recognized the possibility that if they were unable to negotiate a compromise that they may need to defend their interpretation of events.

Over the duration of the practicum round, the consultants described a number of different problems that they had to deal with concerning the student teachers:

> She was acutely stressed all three times that I went to see her. I think the whole agenda that she was working through was impacting on her ability to perform in classroom situations, which was a real hassle, so I had to work through that with her.
>
> Myself and the school facilitator would talk to this person and we would say, 'Well, these are the things that you are doing well'. And as soon as we started talking about things that needed improvement, this person would all of a sudden become very defensive.

And concerning the cooperating teachers:

> When I got there one day she showed me this letter she had written, and some of her concerns. And I was really taken aback, because I hadn't seen any indication of the things she had written. . . . So like in a week, things had really changed.
>
> He [the student teacher] was making himself sick with stress because of the fact that he and she were not getting along. You know, there was a lot of stress between them. She was like almost mad because he wasn't being a better teacher. Like she seemed to think it reflected on her as a supervising teacher or something.

The consultants employed a number of different tactics to manage the situations:

> The school I was in this term, when there was a problem, then they turned to me for help in that area, because they didn't know. So I kind of weighed things and talked to a couple of people at the university, and I then said, 'This is what I think we should do', and they said 'Yeah, that sounds good'.
>
> We were up against a deadline. He either needed to get out, or stay in. And she was telling me she wasn't going to pass him. . . . Well, I just kind of told him the situation, and then I asked

> him, and when he said 'Well, I ought to withdraw', I supported him in that decision.
>
> As time progressed, there was, you know, a little bit of diplomacy needed, and so I acted in that role, and we managed to smooth things out quite nicely. But for a time . . . [I was] documenting what was going on, and talking to both sides, and trying to get both sides, and trying to be the mediator.

The problems often placed the consultants in situations where satisfactory solutions are not easily achieved. This placed considerable strain on the consultants.

> It was stressful, and it was occupying my mind besides the time I was at the school, because I'm a very dedicated person no matter what I do, and I bring my work home with me mentally. So it was upsetting too.
>
> I'm working with the student teacher, giving her some suggestions, actually how to deal with her cooperating teacher, and I placed the ball in her court. I said 'do you want me to talk to her'? and I probably should take more initiative, and talk to the cooperating teacher on my own. But I don't want to rock the boat as well. So I feel like my hands are politically tied.

In the opinion of one consultant, what was even worse was when:

> Only one will look to me, and one will try and go over my head and talk to the practicum coordinator. And that's very hard for me, because then I really feel as if I haven't been in the situation.

When problems arose, the consultants perceived that there were certain bureaucratic procedures to be followed. These could include informing practicum personnel, keeping records of visitations and information gathered, and completing the appropriate forms. However, there was considerable variation in the procedures consultants followed.

When reflecting on the issue of problem management, several of the consultants indicated that it was a time of uncertainty for them:

> I know with that one situation I had, like I almost felt like I had to counsel this girl, and I don't know enough about the practicum and the way it works, as to what even I could say to her with regards to her options.

Another consultant said, when a problem had developed to the point where formal action had to be taken:

> I had no idea at all. And it was just sort of play the game as it developed sort of thing, which I can do as well as anyone else, I suppose. And I just did what I thought was the common-sense things to do.

How to deal with a problem was one thing that the consultants felt was not really discussed in any detail. They felt that procedural guidelines and suggestions for action would have been helpful.

> If you read the manual, there's not one page in there that says what to do if you're having a problem with a student, and like these are the different problems, these are maybe some things you can try.

Although the consultants realized that every situation was unique, and that it would be impossible to provide prescriptions for action, they thought that guidance in the form of case studies, or scenarios, would be of some assistance to them.

They also recognized that there was no substitute for personal aptitude:

> There are partial solutions as in meeting and talking to people who have had problems, and again, certain things in the handbook that I think could help. But besides that, I think you have to have a lot of intuition.

And for experience gained in the field: "I think I've been able to deal more effectively this term because you learn what problems can crop up, and what to do in the event of the problem." Each of the consultants found conflicts/managing a problem situations to be powerful learning experiences.

The consultants exhibited a strong sense of their perception of their role as supporters of student teachers. The manner in which they performed their conferencing and observing roles varied between

individuals, and according to external influences. One of the most significant events for consultants in their work with student teachers was mediating conflict between practicum participants. Although problem management was stressful, it was a significant learning experience.

School Relations

School personnel at the practicum placement sites constitute the third group with which the consultant needs to communicate.

Communication and Collaboration

All of the consultants intimated that they expected the nature of their relationship with the school would be determined as the practicum progressed. Before the practicum had commenced one consultant stated:

> I haven't really thought too much about the relationship that will emerge. I think that I have to get to know the people out there a little bit more, and so that they can get to know me a bit more, and then we'll see what follows from there.

Another consultant commented on the need to clarify expectations, and how those expectations differ from one situation to the next:

> I think you've got to go into the situation with a willingness to develop a collaborative relationship . . . and collectively decide what the dynamic within the group is going to be. . . . An on-going dialogue seems to establish those roles, and that dynamic is different in every situation.

Another consultant, when describing making initial contact with the school, confirmed the importance of clarifying expectations:

> I just went and met the cooperating teacher, and talked about each others ideas about how the practicum should run, and just made it a real social visit, primarily to establish who I was, who they were, what they expected, what I expected.

Most of the consultants, when circumstances allowed, met with the school personnel before the practicum commenced. This often involved, especially for the facilitators in the elementary program, making contact not only with the cooperating teachers, but also with the school principal. Sometimes the school administrators took the leading role in these initial meetings:

> I had phoned the principal the week before and she asked me if I could come that morning, and that was the morning when the principal went through the school philosophy, and took the students on the tour of the school, and gave them the background of the school. And so I was there and got that information the same time the students did.

On other occasions, the consultant played the primary role:

> I went out and presented a mini-workshop. . . . The people that came were the administration from both schools, and the teachers who were going to be involved. . . . We explained the model and what it entailed, and basically how it would work, but at the same point, left it really open in certain areas.

The consultants described what they did to establish channels of communication, and how they tried to encourage a collaborative relationship. The consultants met with cooperating teachers before the day commenced, arrived at the school staff-room during lunchtimes, engaged in three-way and one-on-one discussions, and met with the cooperating teachers as a group. Generally, in the experience of the consultants, the results were favorable:

> I used to go there two days a week, but it was, I don't know, it was just really good. We established that rapport. I knew practically everybody in that school, and they knew me. I was in and out of classrooms all the time.

Familiarity with the school and school personnel appeared to be most valuable to the consultants when they felt a little politicking was necessary. One consultant described the delicate process of attempting

to find cooperating teachers with whom to place three student teachers, and being in a situation of "not wanting to step on anybody's toes, or doing things that I was not supposed to be doing, not following proper protocol there. I mean I was cognizant of all those things." The consultants utilized their interpersonal skills working with the cooperating teachers when they felt it was necessary to seek more collaborative effort.

> What I did was probably a little bit of political two-stepping, by asking her how Sarah was doing, and whether she felt that Sarah had enough time alone in the classroom--looking at it from her point of view. . . . So letting her come to a conclusion that I was hoping for.
>
> She [the cooperating teacher] admitted to me that she is very traditional, that she doesn't believe in whole language. She said to me, 'Maybe this isn't the best place for this girl'. And I said, 'Well, I'm sure you're very flexible'. And she said, 'Oh yes, I am.'

When the occasional, inevitable problem occurs, the need for frequent and open communication becomes even more crucial. Then, the consultants endeavored to acquire the cooperating teachers' views:

> I've tried to make sure that I've fully understood the position of the cooperating teachers in each case. I've talked to them about their experiences with the student teacher. What their assessment of the student teacher has been.

The consultants also tried to ensure that they were available to collaborate with the administration in the making of major decisions, and they were able to appreciate the administrators' perspectives:

> The principal and the assistant principal felt very good about the way it worked out. They encouraged me to get "Martin" to withdraw, because they could see that he wasn't going to pass, and they wanted him out of there because they just felt like it was even a tension the school didn't need, you know, the tension between "Martin" and that teacher.

Some of the consultants recognized that there are certain dangers, or difficulties, in working with cooperating teachers that could be reduced through good communication.

> I think you have to be careful when you're working with a cooperating teacher anyway, as a consultant, because you're both in a role of supporting the student teacher, and you don't want to be at odds with one another. . . . If you have differences, they should be shared in a manner that indicates that, 'Well, this is the way I would do it, and I'm not saying that this is any better than your cooperating teacher is saying.'

Therefore, when working with the cooperating teachers, some of the consultants were conscious that what they said could be interpreted as implying criticism of the cooperating teacher and that this could result in conflict between them.

Some of the elementary facilitators also felt that, if mismanaged, there was a threat that increased collaboration could lead to feelings of resentment amongst some staff members. It was felt that if the school administration requested that the facilitator provided a workshop on a topic that members of the school staff were also knowledgeable about, positive collaborative relations could be damaged.

Only one of the consultants reported engaging in any form of collaborative work with the schools which was not directly related to the supervision of student teachers. In this instance, this involved supplying a school administrator with a folder of information which had been gathered. Another consultant commented:

> No one has ever approached me. You know, if someone approached me and said, 'Would you come in and do this'? then I would. But no-one has thought of me as a resource person in that way. They just think well, this is the person dealing with the student teachers.

As was stated earlier, the lack of time for staff and consultants to meet was perceived by the consultants as a barrier to collaboration.

All of the elementary program facilitators concurred that the staff could not find the additional time to engage in collaborative work. In the opinion of one consultant, they would have confronted the same problem had this request been made of them:

> You're only allotted a certain number of hours a week, and as graduate student, face it, we're very busy people. And if someone says comes in and do this workshop for our school, where do I find the time to do that within my allotted time. I don't mean that to sound selfish, but just realistically, where do I find the time to do all these extra things?

In spite of the perceived difficulties, the need for collaboration was unanimously accepted, and the benefits derived from good communication were valued: "I realized, or became aware of how important it was to work as a unit, rather than a separate entity, and to understand the school as well as the student." When asked what improvements could be made in the practicum to help consultants in the performance of their role, one suggested:

> To bring the cooperating teachers and consultants together for drinks or something, so that we can get to know them on a different level than purely in the classroom for 10 minutes, taking time out of our schedules to try and meet with them. More of a collaborative effort.

One other area in which the consultants thought the university could act to improve communication regarded the schools' expectations of the student teachers. It was suggested that the schools did not fully appreciate how inexperienced the student teachers were, and that they expected them to assume too much responsibility, too quickly. One consultant felt that if this was emphasized a little more in the handbook, or in presentations to schools, it would assist the consultants in communicating this message to the cooperating teachers.

To summarize, the consultants felt that there was a need to clarify expectations concerning the practicum when initiating contact with school personnel. The development of a problem intensified the importance of good communication. However, lack of time, especially from the teachers' perspective, was a serious obstacle to engaging in collaborative activity.

The Role

The graduate students had all been awarded assistantships which required that they spent between six and 12 hours a week in practicum related activities. The number of student teachers they supervised ranged from three to eight. Elementary facilitators were situated at one school site, whereas secondary consultants might be required to supervise students at up to four different locations.

Relevant data are presented under the subheadings of Consultants' Perceptions of Their Role, Commitment, and Effect on Personal Studies.

Consultants' Perception of Their Role

As was reported in the section "Student Teacher Relations", consultants perceived supporting student teachers and providing instruction as their primary functions. As one consultant confirmed:

> I realize I probably lean into their CI instructor's role a little, but they [student teachers] have absolutely no contact with the university once they're in that school, other than their call-backs, and that's not enough for them. . . . So primarily my role, I feel, is to support that student through that.

Some of the consultants expressed the view that they did not think that they should be too directive in performing this task:

> You can't train teachers to teach by saying this is how you prepare a lesson and this is how you do so and so. . . . I think

> my role, as a consultant, is to go in and share different ideas, and different approaches, and things with those student teachers, and to provide them with a range of options. You know, create the supermarket for them, and let them forage through the shelves.

The consultants suggested that they worked towards achieving these ends through their formal and informal interaction with the students. Casual conversations were regarded as opportunities to "plant a few seeds" or to reduce friction between two individuals. An awareness of what was happening in the school was also valued, so that the consultant was able to determine which factors were outside the student teachers' control. One consultant said that, in many respects, they did not think their role was significantly different to that of the department head.

Some of the consultants stated that they had a responsibility to the university to monitor the activities of the student teacher.

> My secondary role, probably as important, is to provide the university with feedback. If there is a situation where maybe, perhaps, some discipline is being needed, or they need to be aware that this student is not fulfilling requirements, then I have to make them aware of that. . . . I feel like I'm more of a go between the university and the practicum situation. Like I'm their eye, I'm their voice, I'm their ear. And if I find a situation I'm uncomfortable with, it's my responsibility to let them know and implement their procedures.

The consultants' stated aim was not to have influence, but to facilitate interaction between the parties involved: "I go out to see how I can support the learning that goes on, and to create an environment whereby the three of us together, cooperating teacher, consultant, and the student teacher, learn from the experience." Liaising between the various groups was perceived as a task that demanded that consultants be flexible in the manner in which they interpreted their role. However, as one consultant reported, there was one task that some consultants performed which they considered should

not be an aspect of their role: "I had to go, like I told you, knocking on doors, and asking people if they'd like to be involved [in student teacher supervision]. And I don't see that as my role at all." In summary, the consultants felt there were many responsibilities to their job, and this demanded that they were responsive to the needs of others.

Commitment

The consultants discussed their commitment to their role in terms of the time commitment and in terms of their personal commitment to the program and to the student teachers.

For one of the consultants the time commitment required was an influential factor in requesting practicum supervision as an assistantship.

> I've chosen the practicum because I can confine it within a manageable period of time, and that's two and a half days of the week. So, half the working week, if you like, I spend in schools with student teachers. And I'm happy to do that. I think that's fair and reasonable.

All but one of the consultants tried to concentrate all their consulting work into a one or two day period. They felt that this partitioning of their time enabled them to concentrate on the task at hand.

> Tomorrow, I've got to be at my first school, they begin at half past seven, and I don't finish tomorrow until nearly five. They're two very long days, but in that period of time, I can devote my entire time and energy to those people. . . . Not only can I manage my own time better myself, fit my commitments around them, I think the other thing I like about it is for those two days or three days I allocate to the student teachers, that's what my focus is.

Concentrating the visitations in this manner did have drawbacks, however.

> When I was smart I would try and put all three student teachers on one or two days. But the problem with that is that you don't have enough time to spend with them all afterwards. You know, you'd have to go after 10 minutes to see the other one.

There is some indication that the practicum program in which the consultant serves may influence their perceptions of how they can employ their time most effectively. A secondary consultant said:

> It's [practicum supervision] not the sort of thing that you can just rush in, spend an hour, rush out again, or spend two hours and rush out again. It's more like you're going to be there for three or four hours to go through a process which is going to be effective.

By contrast, an elementary facilitator stated:

> I'm finding that I prefer to have more short appearances rather than say I'm going to be there all day on one day a week, and half a day another. . . . I was out there for a full eight hours, and there was too much non-productive time in it for me.

However, there was unanimous agreement that the consultants would often spend more time on practicum related activities than was assigned to them in their assistantships. A consultant who had a full 12 hour assistantship said, "I have not done this job in under 20 hours a week. Nowhere near it, because of the range of issues that you have to deal with while you're in the school."

The elementary facilitators confirmed that if they "followed the model" they could perform their duties within their allotted time when things were running smoothly. But if a problem developed, the situation changed: "There were certain weeks where I was out at the school maybe four times in one week, just dealing with the problem. And so then you can't do that and still stay within the time limit of six hours."

This situation can present consultants with a conflict of interests where they have already fulfilled their practicum

responsibilities in terms of the time allocation, but they realize much more could be done.

> I felt that I didn't put in as much time as I should have, or could have. Two of my student teachers were having a hard time. . . . I would have liked to have spent more time with them, but I didn't.

The same situation arose when evaluations were due to be completed. The consultants' time commitment would approximately double during the mid-point and final evaluation periods.

Although some of the consultants may have felt a little frustration that the additional time they committed to practicum supervision was not always recognized, it was not time that they begrudged giving. One facilitator attributed their enjoyment of, and commitment to, their consulting role to the new elementary practicum model:

> I thought the new model would be less demanding on me, and it was paper work wise, administratively less demanding. But for me it was also more enticing. I found myself thinking about it a lot, and wanting to be at the school a lot. I was enjoying it more, and I found myself wanting to spend more time in it.

Similar sentiments were expressed by all the consultants, regardless of the program they served in.

The commitment of the consultants, in terms of the time they spent in the schools, was recognized by the school personnel. Every one of the consultants reported conversations where a member of the school staff commented on the frequency with which the consultants visited the school. One consultant said, "The staff at the school, they're like amazed at how much I'm there." Another added, "The staff in this new school said to me, 'We can't believe how often you're here.' I mean it's not like I'm there every day."

It was evident in the stories the consultants told of their experiences that their commitment extended beyond the time they were scheduled to spend in the schools. Consultants would visit student teachers at very short notice: "It was quite difficult because I'd get a phone call that we have this problem. So I'd say I'll be there in 10 minutes, and away I would go." They would also make themselves available for consultation at all times: "I was having a regular hour and a half phone call every night on the phone, at 9.30 until 11.00. And that was going on four nights a week." If things did not go smoothly, the consultants would often feel somewhat responsible, even when they felt matters were largely beyond their control.

There were limits, though, to which some consultants were prepared to reschedule their own commitments:

> I just made that decision that as far as the practicum . . . was concerned, that I would not skip classes to do things that were associated with the assistantship. And so when they had their meeting I just said, 'Sorry, I have a class'.

However, all of the consultants expressed strongly commitment to the practicum. One consultant's commitment was evident in their having, without pay, supervised, in the Spring term a student whose practicum had been delayed. Others expressed their commitment:

> If you want teaching to be considered a profession you've got to be prepared to give something to the profession. And one of the things that we must all do is to participate in the preparation of colleagues, and the development of ourselves. And one of the ways I can contribute to the profession, I feel, is to help colleagues to develop.

> I take it personally as a tremendous responsibility, because . . . this is their potential career that they're interested in, and I mean you can have a real effect upon it. . . . I guess my aim is to have a positive effect.

The consultants believed that practicum supervision was regarded as a task where one could expend minimal effort: "To do a half-assed job as a consultant would be so easy. I mean you could just go in and say 'Yeah, you're doing fine,' or, 'Yeah, OK, you've got your lesson plans done'." But their comments did not indicate that this is an approach they adopted:

> I felt I was a vital member of this practicum organization, or process, in that if I shirk my end of the responsibility, then that's not fair to those involved. . . . If I don't do the type of job I think I should be doing, I'm going to get feelings of guilt . . . [and that I am] not capable.

Most of the consultants added that having to take part in, and sign, the student teacher evaluation added to their sense of responsibility and accountability.

As well as their personal desire to help student teachers develop, some of the consultants were motivated by previous experiences:

> In my own undergraduate career, my practicum experiences were little horror stories, as far as university consultants. And it was something I felt, well, if I'm going to do this I want to make sure that I give the student teacher better guidance than I was ever given. So it becomes personal too.

Effect on Personal Studies

A graduate assistantship obviously influences the amount of time graduate students can devote to their own studies. I asked the participants to tell me about their experiences.

Many of the consultants recalled the stress of trying to keep up with their own work, sometimes working all night and weekends in order to get assignments completed. Again there was the conflict of not knowing what to devote their time to: "I had one professor tell me last term that I wasn't doing enough work on my thesis, and that I should

take a step back from doing my TA." The consultant explained the decision they made:

> But this was their future, you know. I was not only out to help them to get through that, but I'm responsible to the university as well. And so, I don't know, maybe like a martyr, I put my courses on a back burner until I could get that under control.

The consequences for that consultant were "taking two courses of incompletes just to get everything finished up."

The number of student teachers the consultants had assigned to them greatly influenced their ability to manage their assistantships and their studies. A consultant described supervising three students as being equivalent to taking one three-credit course.

I also asked each of the consultants to inform me of how their studies were progressing during the period in which this study was conducted. At the beginning of the practicum round a consultant replied, "That's a tough problem with an assistantship . . . things come up, so it always seems your own work takes a back burner, at least initially in the practicum." Another consultant outlined their priorities:

> My highest priority right now is to get my thesis done. And so I think, I think, ask me in a week, but I think I'll have a fairly good grasp of what I need to do to keep it in line.

The next time I spoke to the consultant they said:

> My focus right now is so narrow on my thesis that it almost obliterates anything else. And then I get caught off guard with this consultantship that I have, and then I switch hats and begin to do this, and then the stress from not doing my thesis is incredible. Just incredible. I'm tired. I'm really tired.

Other consultants gave very similar replies when asked how their work was progressing. One reported that they were at least a month behind the schedule they had set themselves. Plans made by the

consultant to keep the time "partitioned" had been broken: "My plan was not to do that, because I was just too tired, but I've just had to. If I hadn't, that stuff [gesturing to thesis papers] wouldn't be sitting on that table, right there now." Another said that they now realized that their productive work would not start until the practicum was over. They added:

> I actually spent more time away from my own work than I thought I was going to be at the start of the practicum. Just because I wanted to, you know. No excuse, just poor prioritizing on my part probably.

However, one consultant was pleasantly surprised about the way things developed:

> I was worried . . . [because] the way my courses worked towards the end of the term, it would have been really difficult for me to have put in those extra hours towards the end. And as it turned out, everything just went really well.

When the consultants reflected on their involvement, the dichotomy of being a graduate student and a practicum supervisor, was apparent:

> There is a clash between the university as your employer, and the university as your educational institution, and trying to be both things. Trying to serve two masters.
>
> It's been a really positive experience, except the fact that I enjoy it to the point where I put other things on the back burner, and I know those things should have been at the forefront.

Consequently, a couple of the graduate students indicated that they, if offered a choice of assistantships in the future, might select an option where their time commitment was more easily regulated.

To summarize, consultants perceived supporting student teachers and providing instruction as their main supervisory duties. The participants were highly committed to practicum supervision, often devoting more time to their responsibilities than stipulated in their

assistantships. Sometimes this commitment to the practicum was detrimental to the pursuit of their own studies.

Rewards

The consultants saw that there were many rewards in being involved in the supervision of student teachers. These rewards could be classified into two broad categories: professional development and personal rewards.

Professional Development

All of the consultants recognized that they developed their own professional abilities through working with the student teachers they supervised. One consultant indicated: "Every time I do this, I get a better glimpse of what teaching is, and it will be helpful to me when I go back into my classroom." The experience of going into different schools and seeing different systems was also regarded as valuable.

Working with undergraduates was also valued as experience for those consultants who were considering careers in a university setting.

In more general terms, most of the consultants expressed the opinion that practicum supervision was a good exercise in personal relations. It also enabled them to apply some of the skills and theory acquired in their university courses: "It sure made some of the courses that I was taking more relevant. So I guess part of that, as my professional development, if you want to use that umbrella phrase, was worth its weight in gold."

Personal Rewards

All of the consultants described specific events which indicated how personally rewarding student teacher supervision had been for them. Watching the student teachers "grow" in technical ability, as individual personalities, and in confidence, were some of the rewards identified. As one consultant said of the final visit they made:

> There was really no reason for me to go and see these kids. That was pretty self-indulgent on my part to ask to come in and see them teach in that last week, but it was a really pleasurable thing for me.

The consultants also reported receiving personal feedback from student teachers and cooperating teachers. Being sent "thank you" cards and being taken out for lunch are examples of occasions where the consultants have received overt gestures of appreciation.

One consultant also said, in our final interview, there was the reward with respect to status: "For some reason going out to the classroom and doing observation, at least for me, gave me more prestige with my colleagues."

When the practicum round had been completed, and the consultants reflected on their term of student supervision, they all expressed a sense of personal satisfaction. That personal satisfaction derived from their experiences in the schools:

> I enjoyed the relationship with the teachers at the school. That was really pleasant. I enjoyed being around a school too. Just being around that kind of energy makes me really want to teach kids again, and I'm sure I will.

> I've gained from it in the sense that people, in making those comments that they made, the positive comments that they've made, they've affirmed for me that the way I've chosen to approach the role has been useful, and acceptable, and appropriate to them. . . . I'm not looking for rewards, but where they come, it's generally from the sorts of comments cooperating teachers and student teachers make, in the way they assess your contribution to their growth, and their experience in that phase of the practicum.

> . . . That I've managed to create the environment and the relationships within that environment which I set out to facilitate.

Personal satisfaction was also drawn from being able to have the opportunity to contribute to the student teachers' development.

> Just watching the growth and development of the other four was really rewarding and significant for me. They all did very well. Watching them interact with the children in the classroom was really rewarding, to think that maybe I might have had a little bit of influence on them.
>
> It's kind of rewarding to be able to sign your name to a document stating that this student would be a good asset to a program at any school, and honestly believe it [and] maybe that I made one iota of difference towards that change.

Chapter Summary

There was significant variation in the amount of supervisory experience possessed by the study participants. Their initial motivation for acceptance of an assistantship was financial, but they were also motivated by their commitment to education.

The practicum "model" influenced the nature of the consultants' experiences, especially where the observation and evaluation of student teachers was concerned. University facilitators perceived school support for the model to be very important. All of the participants expressed some uncertainty regarding their role description, particularly at the beginning of the practicum. Although all the consultants received "support" from the university, there were occasions when more assistance would have been appreciated. The consultants, in turn, considered supporting student teachers to be an important aspect of their role.

Managing problems was a significant experience for the participants. Facilitating good communication between the university

and the school was a priority, but initiating collaborative activity was not easily achieved, due to time constraints. Consultants often spent more time involved in supervisory activity than contracted to. This, on occasions, detracted from their ability to concentrate on their own studies. In addition to the financial rewards, consultants drew professional and personal satisfaction from their work.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In this chapter I focus on the major issues arising from the discussion of the categories presented in the previous chapter. I draw attention to themes extracted from the data and address the questions which provided the initial direction for my research. In the process of discussing these issues I compare and contrast the findings of this study with relevant literature.

The chapter is organized in seven sections to address:

1. Establishing constructive and congenial relationships.
2. Teacher preparation and the practicum.
3. Commitment of the graduate students: Practical and ethical considerations.
4. University preparation and support of consultants.
5. The problematic aspects of student teacher evaluation.
6. Reconstructing the consultant's role.
7. University facilitator and faculty consultant: How were their experiences different?

Establishing Constructive and Congenial Relationships

The perceived need for constructive and congenial relationships to help establish a positive learning environment for student teachers is noted in the literature (e.g., Zimpher, deVoss, and Nott, 1980; Katz, 1986), and was implied in the comments of the participants in this study. The consultants strove to encourage a collaborative atmosphere which they felt would facilitate student teacher development. However,

the consultants' ability to develop meaningful relationships was often constrained. Conflicting expectations of the practicum participants required that consultants attempted to select or "carve" a path which was acceptable to all the parties involved. Here, there was some evidence to support Katz's (1986) argument that the consultant is continually acting in response to the needs and requirements of the other practicum participants.

In the opinion of the consultants, certain conditions and practices may have been seen as desirable for a successful practicum experience. However, the extent to which these conditions could be achieved was often mediated by other factors. Not wishing to appear critical of the cooperating teachers, and trying to be responsive to the expectations of others, were powerful influences. The consultants were frequently confronted by a range of demands and options. The experiences of the consultants who participated in the study support Hoover, O'Shea, and Carroll's (1988) contention that it is not easy for consultants to relate to the incongruities between their own, university, and school priorities. In such circumstances consultants either selected the course which they believed represented the best compromise, or attempted to negotiate a mutually agreeable arrangement. On occasions the task must have felt somewhat like walking a tightrope, where leaning too far to one side or the other could have had disastrous results.

There may be some grounds to argue that consultants' perceived need to establish collegial or congenial relationships serves to constrain their ability to contribute to the growth of student teachers.

Teacher Preparation and the Practicum

Consultants felt that the nature of the overall teacher preparation program constrained their work with student teachers. Their main concern was related to the timing and duration of the practicum.

The length of individual practica (12 weeks in the elementary practicum, and 8 in the secondary) was thought to be sufficient for final placements. However, the total amount of practical experience student teachers acquired during the entire program was considered inadequate. The consultants were also concerned that, for many of the student teachers, the final practicum was their first real experience of being in sole control of a class. Consequently, the consultants sometimes found themselves working with student teachers to develop basic skills rather than engaging in higher level reflection.

Consultants' relative ignorance of the content of professional education courses was another source of concern. Anderson (1990) argued that effective consultants possess knowledge of teacher education program goals and content. The desire of consultants to be involved in planning and preparation phases was recognized by O'Connell Rust (1988), and the value of doing so by Bruneau (1993b). Several of the study participants attempted to develop an appreciation of the student teachers' preparation and background through attending the occasional class, and by talking to curriculum instructors. Some of the consultants also said that they would have liked to work with the student teachers before the practicum commenced. Such involvement might help consultants relate university course theory to classroom practice in their work with student teachers, or as Cohn (1981) recommended, continue methods instruction in the field. However, there would be

time, financial, and organizational constraints to overcome before this could be arranged.

Commitment of the Graduate Students

Questions regarding whether graduate students should be employed in student teacher supervision are usually related to concerns about their academic qualifications and experience. Although I believe these questions merit further examination, I do not intend to broach that topic here. However, the degree of commitment exhibited by the graduate students who participated in this study raised some interesting issues which I shall consider.

As reported in the previous chapter, Watts (1984) and Samiroden (1992) suggested that graduate students may be somewhat preoccupied with their own studies, and therefore less able or willing to spend time on practicum related activities. Bowman (1979) also suggested that graduate students are not interested in practicum supervision. Based on the data I collected, I would suggest that some graduate students are very committed to, and interested in, their work as consultants, perhaps to the short-term detriment of their own studies.

Several of the graduate students gave notice of their intention to limit their involvement in the practicum at the beginning of the round. However, once the practicum commenced, there was little to suggest that they were less than fully committed. Some weeks the participants reported spending up to double their contracted time on practicum activities. The graduate students spoke of late evening and weekend communications with student teachers. All of the participants described how surprised personnel at the practicum sites were that the graduate

students visited the schools so frequently. Only on two occasions did the participants report missing practicum activities. Rather than asking, "Are graduate students committed enough?" the experiences I documented in this study lead me to ask, "Are they too committed?"

In response to this question I suggest that one needs to look at both sides of the "equation." For the graduate students involved in this study, the assistantship detracted from their ability to focus on their own studies. They attributed incomplete courses, having to revise scheduled deadlines, and reports of feeling "stressed" to their involvement in the practicum. However, these losses must be measured against the perceived benefits. The assistantship not only provided some of the graduate students with a means of financial support, it was also valued as a personal and professional learning experience. Consequently, from the graduate students', and the university's perspective, it may be a case of weighing the relative advantages against the disadvantages. If graduate students were able to balance their course enrollments with their assistantship assignments, and the university was able to help the students regulate their commitment, it should be possible to maintain a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Preparation and Support of Consultants

For some of the graduate students the nature of the preparation provided to fulfill the role of consultant was a significant issue. Some of the participants expressed uncertainty about the nature of their role, their ability to fulfill their perceived responsibilities, and the emphases of the program in which they were working. To some extent these feelings may be a natural reaction to undertaking any new

challenge. However, those responsible for the operation of the practicum should also ask whether anything extra could have been done to assist the consultants in the early stages of this process?

Many of the consultants referred directly to their practicum handbook to try to make some sense of their role and to develop some understanding of the foci of their programs. However, the participants were only able to gain limited guidance from their handbooks. Consequently, the consultants offered a number of suggestions which they felt might improve the preparation and support provided. Some of the consultants felt that the orientation process could have been improved, especially for consultants who were new to the program. The opportunity for new consultants to meet with more experienced consultants was appreciated. However, these meetings might have been of greater value if several sessions had been scheduled in the period before the practicum commenced. Sessions towards the middle or end of the practicum round were perceived to be of limited value.

Managing conflicts among practicum participants was regarded by the consultants as one of the most significant events in their work. Consequently, another concern and one which was also reported by Niemeyer and Moon (1988), is that the problems which may confront consultants need to be examined in their preparation. One might argue that each situation is unique, and that it would be impossible to predict events and outcomes. However, discussing potential problems and alternative approaches to managing them might have enhanced the consultants' preparation.

The issue of the formal preparation of consultants for practicum supervision is also worthy of examination. As noted in Chapter Two,

Anderson (1990) recommended that all potential practicum consultants be required to complete a course in teacher supervision. Such a course could provide an opportunity to examine various approaches to supervision and a forum to discuss ideas and concerns. Consequently, the availability of a program on teacher supervision to graduate students might reduce the sense of "isolation" felt by some consultants. Such a course also has the potential to enhance the general standard of student teacher supervision provided by the institution.

One could argue that improving the quality of student teacher supervision is important, and that the quality of that supervision can be developed through training. If one believes this to be true, there is a strong basis for requesting that additional finances be directed to the training of consultants. However, current economic conditions render allocation of further resources to student teacher training and supervision unlikely unless the status of this field is raised to the level of other academic endeavors.

Problematic Aspects of Student Teacher Evaluation

Conducting summative evaluations of student teachers was, in some respects, a problematic task for the consultants. The consultants appeared to take great satisfaction from seeing student teachers develop in confidence and skill. However, in those situations where the student teachers were unable to make the required progress, the task of evaluation sometimes became uncomfortable. This supports the view expressed by Hoover, et al. (1988) that not recommending a student teacher for certification is an unpleasant responsibility which occasionally confronts consultants.

In one respect, facing the prospect of writing a failing report was somewhat daunting because the consultants realized that this could have a significant, negative impact on student teachers' immediate job prospects and future teaching careers. The sense of frustration was even greater in those circumstances where consultants believed that the student teacher had potential. Inadequate classroom experience, personal problems, or personality clashes with cooperating teachers were all regarded as factors which could contribute to an unsuccessful practicum experience for a student teacher, but were often beyond the consultants' control.

The pressure to write positive student teaching evaluations may also come from other sources. Consultants may feel that they have to "defend" their recommendation for the non-certification of a student teacher. They may be concerned that their professional opinions will be challenged. Often, when consultants anticipate problems, much time is spent considering the positions they believe they should take and documenting evidence to support their cases. Such circumstances may also demand that consultants reexamine their interpretation of "satisfactory teaching" to ensure that personal standards are aligned with those of the parent institution and the cooperating teacher.

The process of student teacher evaluation played a significant role in the consultant's work. I return to this theme in my discusssion of the following issues.

Reconstructing the Consultant's Role

Zeichner and Tabacnick (1982) and Ashcroft and Griffiths (1989) recognized the difficulties associated with implementing new models of practicum organization. Consultants involved in this study experienced some of these difficulties. Information on the consultant's role contained in the practicum handbook, and preparation the consultants received in their orientation, provided some initial role guidance. However, several of the consultants in both the elementary and secondary programs indicated that there appeared to be some mismatch between policy stated in the practicum handbook and practice in the field. I concur with the finding of Jackson and McKay in their survey of the University of Alberta 1993 Elementary Practicum (p. 8) that there was tremendous pressure on practicum participants to revert back to traditional roles. Personal interpretations of individual responsibilities, and the pressure exerted from the expectations of the other members of the practicum triads, appeared to influence aspects of the supervisory behavior of the consultants.

The way in which the actual process of "reconstructing the role" played itself out may be illustrated through examining how the university facilitators came to understand and develop their involvement in the observation and evaluation of the student teachers. The student teachers' wishes were not always congruent with the new model, a model which no longer required that the university facilitator conduct a predetermined number of clinical supervision cycles. The elementary university facilitators also had their own perceptions of appropriate professional conduct. Interpretations of the model, expectations of the various participants, and personal perspectives were blended by the

university facilitators. The role that each individual university facilitator played in the observation and evaluation of their student teachers was therefore reconstructed in an attempt to accommodate all these demands.

University Facilitator Versus Faculty Consultant

I believe that the experiences of the elementary university facilitators were very similar to those of the secondary faculty consultants. Many of the issues of significance to the university facilitators were of equal significance to the faculty consultants. For all of the participants there were the "highs" of feeling that they had contributed to the development of a future teacher, and the "lows" of having to work through a particular conflict or problem. I contend that, in essence, their experiences were very similar.

However, I also feel that, in some respects, there were differences in experiences between the two groups, and that these differences were a product of the models in which they operated. For those university facilitators working in the elementary practicum there appeared to be a greater mismatch between policy and practice. The changes that had just been introduced into the elementary practicum created some conflicts of expectations for the university facilitators to manage. As mentioned above, the areas of student teacher observation and evaluation were particularly notable. Some of the university facilitators had difficulty coming to terms with the requirement to take part in the evaluation of student teachers without necessarily having completed a recommended number of observations. Due to the established

and more clearly defined process in the secondary practicum, this was not a sources of intrarole conflict for the faculty consultants.

The importance of school support for the model was another area where there appeared to be a difference in experience and opinion. Secondary faculty consultants tended to talk about developing good working relations with particular cooperating teachers. Elementary university facilitators, however, referred to the school facilitators and to the school as a whole. The culture of the school was perceived by the facilitators to be a crucial factor in the successful implementation of the elementary model, and was frequently discussed in our interviews. Although the school culture may in fact be equally important in determining the success of secondary practicum programs, it did not receive the same emphasis in our discussions.

Somewhat related to the theme of school support is that of school control. Again, the willingness and ability of a school to take "ownership" of the practicum was only an issue for the elementary university facilitators. Jackson and McKay (1993, p. 7) stated that in their new role the university facilitators were better placed to facilitate school decisions regarding the practicum. I believe that these particular university facilitators were very eager to encourage school personnel to assume greater control of the practicum. By contrast, the concepts of control and ownership were not a major consideration for the secondary faculty consultants.

Finally, I contend that the elementary university facilitators felt greater pressure to work with school personnel in a collaborative fashion. The data suggest that the university facilitators experienced some difficulty in meeting these expectations. Compiling evaluation

reports in a "totally collaborative" fashion was described by one facilitator as impractical. The school staff was perceived to be too busy for additional meetings. The facilitators themselves recognized that they would have difficulty meeting the requirements of the schools if the schools wished to engage in a time consuming collaborative activity. The university facilitators, unlike their secondary counterparts, experienced the pressure of an expectation that they felt they were largely unable to meet.

My findings lead me to conclude that the experiences of university facilitators and faculty consultants were comparable. Although university facilitators were confronted by a wider range of issues than were the faculty consultants, essentially, the nature of their experiences was similar.

Recommendations

One of the purposes of this study was to make recommendations pertaining to the work of practicum consultants and more specifically, the use of graduate students as consultants. The recommendations below are offered for consideration to practicum personnel with decision making authority.

1. Ensure that all consultants are aware of the available "support contacts", and that the consultants have had the opportunity to meet with these contacts before the practicum round begins.
2. Arrange several meetings (before and shortly after the beginning of the practicum) where inexperienced consultants can talk with individuals who have been consultants in previous years.

3. Involve the consultants in a few of the student teachers' curriculum instruction/methods classes in the period immediately prior to the practicum round.

4. Incorporate a section into the "practicum handbook" which is specifically directed towards the consultant.

5. Ensure that a formal course in teacher supervision is available to those involved in the practicum, and designate it as a prerequisite for *all* graduate students who have no formal training in supervision.

6. Attempt to achieve some degree of continuity in the placement of consultants at practicum sites. If possible, consultants who have developed successful working relationships at particular schools should be placed at the same site during subsequent practicum rounds.

7. Consider utilizing the practicum supervision learning experience as a formal aspect of the graduate student's professional preparation. A practicum supervision field placement combined with an appropriate academic assignments could be recognized for course credits.

Suggestions for Further Research.

This study examined the experiences of graduate students who were practicum consultants in the academic year 1991-1992. There are many other potential research topics related to practicum organization and supervision. For those who may be interested, I offer the following as possible avenues for further research.

1. What factors are most influential in fostering collaborative relationships between schools and universities? What can universities continue to do to help bring the two cultures closer together?

2. Which "model" of practicum organization receives the widest approval of teacher educators, of schools, and of student teachers? Is there any one model that could satisfy the general demands of all these groups? If so, could it be implemented in an education faculty as large as that at the University of Alberta?

3. Who should represent the university as practicum consultants? What are the practical and ethical arguments for and against employing graduate students as practicum consultants?

4. What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of university personnel being engaged in student teacher evaluation? Should university consultants be involved in evaluation? If so, what should the nature of that involvement be?

5. At present the organization of the elementary practica is significantly different from the secondary practica in many respects. Should the secondary education department follow the elementary model as closely as possible, extract those elements that have been perceived to be most successful, or develop its own model totally independently?

6. How significant is school culture in determining the success of the elementary practicum program? What factors contribute to the culture of schools which are considered successful practicum sites?

Chapter Summary

The perceived need to develop collegial relationships appeared to constrain consultants' work in assisting student teachers in their professional growth. The participants also saw their own unfamiliarity with teacher preparation programs and student teachers' lack of classroom experience as other constraining factors.

The graduate students who participated in this study were committed to the practicum, sometimes to the extent that their own studies were sacrificed. Some further preparation for practicum consultants was both recommended and desired by the participants.

The task of student teacher evaluation was sometimes one of the most difficult supervisory responsibilities. The participants interpreted their role as described in practicum policy, then reconstructed their roles in accordance with the demands of the practicum participants with whom they interacted.

I contend that, in essence, university facilitators' and faculty consultants' experiences are similar. My recommendations pertain to the preparation of practicum consultants, and to utilizing the experience of practicum supervision as a means of professional development for graduate students.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide: First Interview

1. What made you apply for and accept your assistantship?
2. What was your first choice occupation as your assistantship?
3. How many hours a week are you contracted to work in the terms of your assistantship?
4. Is that the number of hours, more hours, or less hours than you originally desired?
5. Did you receive any advice on what would constitute a "reasonable" work-load?
6. How many hours did you spend last week in consulting-related activities?
7. For how many student teachers are you acting as university facilitator?
8. Did you meet the student teachers before the practicum began?
   If "yes": a) On how many occasions?
   b) Who arranged these meetings?
   c) What was the nature of these meetings?
9. How do you feel about the quantity of time you have been able to spend with the student teachers?
10. Could you confirm for me at what stage you are presently at in your own studies?
11. How do you intend to organize your time around your own study commitments and your assistantship work for the remainder of this practicum?
12. How successful or unsuccessful do you think you will be?
13. How often have you been a consultant or cooperating teacher before this academic year?
    a) When?
    b) Where?
    c) For what period of time?
14. Do you feel you have had other relevant past experience?
15. What are the support structures behind you, such as practicum associates, etc.?
16. What has been the nature of the communication between you and that

personnel?

17. What responsibilities do you see yourself as having as a facilitator?
18. How well prepared do you feel to fulfill these responsibilities?
19. Describe which factors have contributed to making you feel prepared or ill-prepared to undertake this role.
20. What is your perception of the expectations held of you by the university in your role as university facilitator?
21. How congruent are these expectations with your expectations of yourself?
22. What about your perception of the expectations of your student teachers?
23. In what ways are they similar and dissimilar to your own expectations?
24. How do you view the concept of reflective teaching in the practicum?
25. How do you feel about the use of journals in this approach?
26. What type of relationship would you like to forge with the personnel at the school you visit?
27. What do you feel you will gain from being a facilitator?
28. What events or experiences in your work as a university facilitator have been most significant to date?
29. What made it/them so significant?

Appendix B

Covering Letter for Member Check

608C Michener Park
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 5A1

Ph. 435-7971

5 June, 1993

Dear (name),

Please find enclosed a copy of the chapter in which I present the findings based on the data supplied by yourself and the other consultants who participated. Copies have been given to all the other participants who took part in the study.

As I am sure you are aware, I ask you to review the chapter so that I can increase the "trustworthiness" of the study.

I would appreciate it if you could find the time to read through the chapter, and to give me some feedback on my interpretation of your experiences and opinions. I also ask you to indicate whether there is anything you feel should be added or deleted.

Please feel free to write any comments you may have on the copy. If it would be more convenient for you to discuss the chapter, rather than record your comments on paper, please call me at the above number, or leave a message, and I will return your call at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you once again for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Roberts